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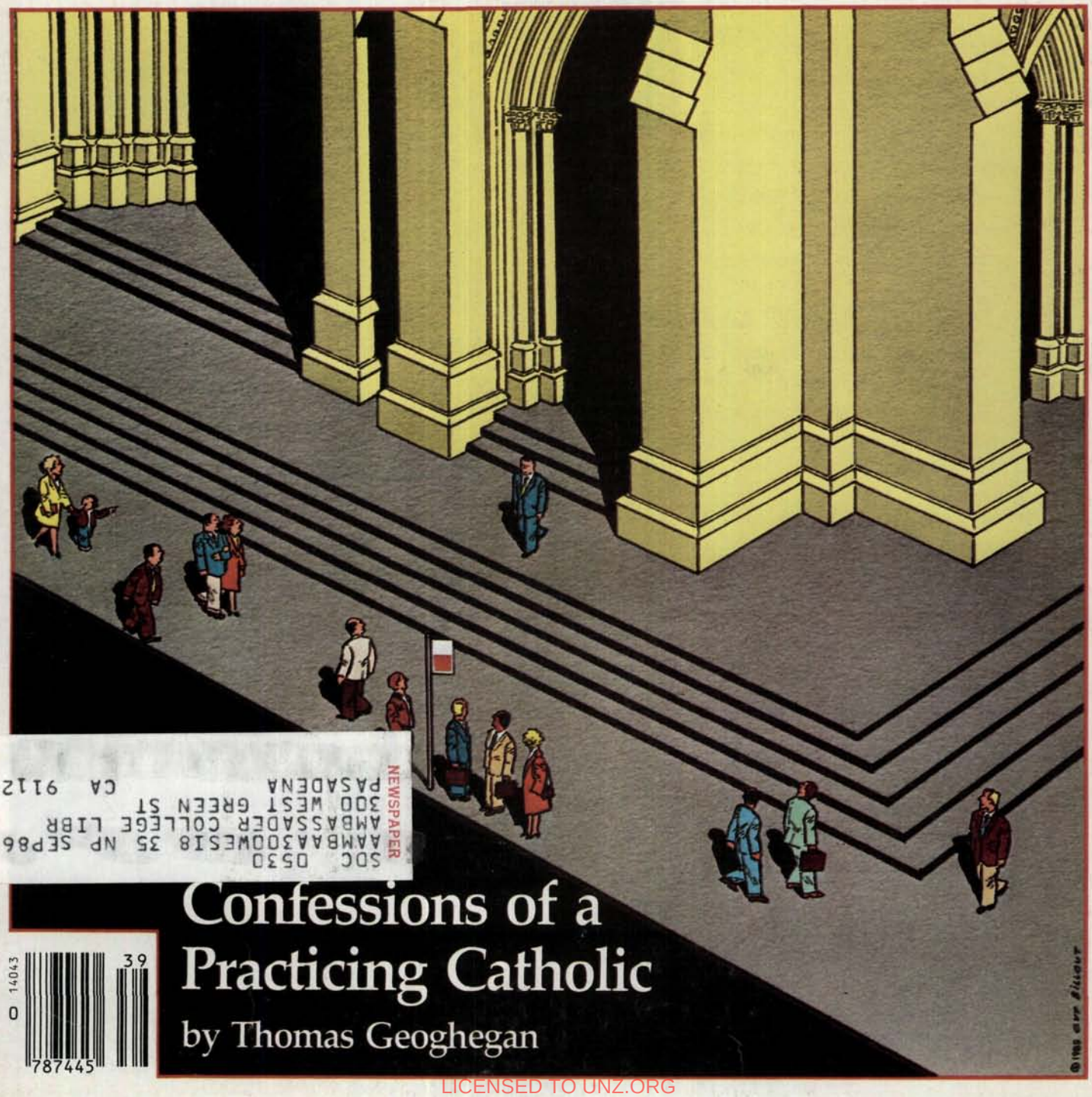
THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEP 19 1985



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by Thomas Geoghegan

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4 **TRB FROM WASHINGTON** ..... VOX POP CROCK
Opinion polls get sillier and sillier.

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... About Sister Mary Ignatius, &c.

7 **THE EDITORS** ..... FREE TO SHOES
President Reagan displays courage against protectionism. But will it last?
NOTEBOOK
Sanctions' bite, John Connally's shirt, &c.

8 **FRED BARNES** ..... WHITE HOUSE WATCH: FALL DEFENSIVE
The administration hunkers down.

10 **LAURENCE H. TRIBE** ..... REAGAN'S CONSTITUTION
Termites among the strict constructionists.

11 **CRAIG PYES** ..... PRIVATE GENERAL
The bizarre history of John K. Singlaub and the World Anti-Communist League.

13 **MURRAY WAAS** ..... ON THE HILL: MEDIA SPECTER
How a little-known senator became a well-known publicity hound.

15 **WALTER LAQUEUR** ..... NATO'S IDENTITY CRISIS
One of the biggest problems of the European alliance is that the United States tries to solve all its problems.

18 **THOMAS GEOGHEGAN** ..... CONFESSIONS OF A 'PRACTICING' CATHOLIC
A yuppie lawyer's dirty little secret: he believes in God.

26 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: REVISED VERSION
A disappointing look at a woman's disillusion.

28 **ROBERT ALTER** ..... THE POETRY OF THE BIBLE
How the structure of biblical verse combines literary beauty with religious vision.

32 **GABRIEL ZAID** ..... ONE NATION DIVISIBLE
Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family
by Shirley Christian

35 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... SEEING AS BELIEVING
Cahiers du Cinéma
The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave
edited by Jim Hillier

38 **HENRY FAIRLIE** ..... AMERICAN MOMENTS
Mining Town: The Photographic Record of T.N. Barnard and Nellie Stockbridge from the Coeur d'Alenes
by Patricia Hart and Ivar Nelson

40 **ANTHONY QUINTON** ..... TRAVELS WITH A PHILOSOPHER
The Time of My Life
By W. V. Quine

43 **WASHINGTON DIARIST** ..... PRETORIAN GUARDS

COVER by Guy Billout for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 18.

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FROM WASHINGTON

VOX POP CROCK

Ferdinand Marcos, president of all the Philippines, decided last month to put off holding a presidential election. According to him, a public opinion survey had shown that most people don't want an election. Marcos provided no details of this remarkable poll. But even if he made it up, this is the ultimate triumph for opinion-poll democracy: an election canceled on the ostensible authority of a poll.

For a year, advocates of "constructive engagement" have been flourishing a September 1984 poll, financed by the State Department, supposedly showing that three out of four urban blacks in South Africa oppose economic sanctions. A poll taken in August by *The Sunday Times* of London shows exactly the opposite. Whatever the explanation, it's absurd to suppose that political opinions expressed to a perfect stranger who knocks on your door in a society like South Africa have any validity at all. Sometimes you even see serious references to opinion polls taken in China and the Soviet Union.

The usual complaint about polls is that they lead to democratic excess. They put representative government on too short a leash. Perpetually informed of what the voters think on every issue, politicians follow instead of leading. My complaint is different. Polls undermine democracy, even here where we have real elections. That's because polls don't measure public opinion. They create it, often with building blocks of ignorance, prejudice, and simple muddle. Worse, they reinforce the impression among voters and politicians alike that untethered opinion is what democracy is about.

Some polls solemnly report people's opinions about the unknowable. A *Washington Post*/ABC News poll in July revealed that 54 percent of Americans don't expect President Reagan's cancer to recur before he leaves office. Thirty-three percent think it will recur, and only 12 percent have no opinion. According to a poll taken by *Newsweek* in August, 52 percent of the public now believes that an AIDS epidemic among the general population is either "very likely" or "somewhat likely." The more you know about cancer or AIDS, the more you know know that the correct answer to these questions is "don't know." Yet only a few courageous citizens dare to have no opinion. It seems almost unpatriotic.

Equally silly and more nefarious are questions like: "Do you think most poor people are lazy or do you think most poor people are hard-working?" Thus a *Los Angeles Times* poll last April. Perhaps it's reassuring that 51 percent said hard-working and 26 percent said lazy. But only 23 percent got the right answer, which is "not sure." How can you be sure about such a preposterous generality? Yet the very act of taking the poll and publicizing the results gives legitimacy and weight to empty prejudices.

At the other extreme are polls asking people's opinions about indisputable questions of fact. According to a Gallup poll this month, 11 percent of taxpayers are of the opinion that their taxes will go up under Reagan's tax-reform plan. Forty-six percent believe their taxes will go down. In fact, the vast majority of people's taxes will go down. Perhaps more seriously, a recent Cambridge Reports poll concluded that almost one person in five believes, incorrectly, that few if any cancers are treatable.

Pollsters profit from the ignorance of their subjects. Are they under no obligation to correct it? Shouldn't pollsters inform the people who have donated their time to answer questions that, yes, most cancers *are* treatable, and they should see a doctor right away when they find a lump? Don't they have some kind of obligation to correct the widespread misapprehensions they uncover about tax reform, or AIDS, or the state of the economy, rather than leaving the impression that these are all simply matters of opinion?

No poll allows you to express reasoned views. You're not allowed to ask, "What do you mean by 'lazy'?" or "Does 'somewhat' mean more or less than 20 percent?" There is no answer category for "This question makes no sense" or "I reject your premises." That is because polls don't seek reasoned opinions. Vague attitudes are what they want, and what they impose on the political system as reflections of "public opinion."

Even the granddaddy poll question about presidential popularity is essentially unanswerable. The classic formulation is, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Reagan is handling his job?" I think Reagan has done brilliantly at "handling his job." I just disagree with him about nearly everything. What am I supposed to say?

At their sleaziest, polls take a subject on which the vast majority of people are completely ignorant, implant a prejudice, call it an opinion, and serve it up as a basis for policy. The insurance industry hired the distinguished pollsters Yankelovich, Skelly and White to study public opinion about the proposal in Reagan's tax-reform plan to tax the so-called "inside buildup" in whole life insurance policies. The poll showed that 49 percent had never even heard of Reagan's tax reform, let alone this "inside buildup" business. But the pollster read a long description of the "inside buildup" provision, explaining that "taxes would be paid whether or not the person actually obtained any money" and that "a typical 35-year-old man" would owe $5,800 in increased taxes. People were asked their reaction to "this new tax" (actually, of course, part of a general tax cut for individuals). Surprise, surprise, 72 percent opposed it.

Near the beginning of the survey, 62 percent said they were familiar with the concept of whole life insurance. By the end, 71 percent were "aware that you can borrow the cash surrender value of a whole life insurance policy," and even more were dead set against the government's monkeying around with whole life's current tax advantages. Eighty-three percent said that ending the tax advantage would make whole life insurance "less desirable." The insurance people hail this recognition of a mathematical truism as proof that Americans are against closing their loophole.

It's ridiculous to suppose that anyone can form a valid opinion about an issue like the taxation of "inside buildup" in whole life insurance policies based exclusively on information supplied by a pollster. There is no loophole in the tax code that Yankelovich et al. couldn't manufacture a majority in defense of, for their usual fee. It's time to stop listening to these people. Better yet, it's time to stop talking to them.

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CORRESPONDENCE

'SISTER MARY' CONT'D.

To the editors:

As the author of the play "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You," I would like to respond to a letter in your pages from Justin Finger of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (August 12&19). Mr. Finger was stung by a remark of Robert Brustein, which expressed disapproval that the ADL had joined religious groups who have attempted to, in Brustein's words, "suppress" my play. Mr. Finger claimed the ADL did not attempt to "suppress" my play, only to criticize it.

In both St. Louis and Boston, the ADL released statements calling my play offensive and "misrepresentative of the Catholic faith and of those who believe and practice it." These statements were released in support of the Catholic League of Religious and Civil Rights, a conservative Catholic group that in both cases was trying to close the play down. (It did not succeed.) The ADL's release ended: "the message and spirit of this play should be repudiated emphatically, and we join the Catholic League in doing so."

If the ADL wished to join the Catholic League in condemning the play but *not* to support the actual suppression of it, they must do better at making that distinction known in their future releases. If that distinction is not made publicly, their "repudiation" is perceived as supporting the attempts at suppression.

As a side issue, I have recently had a futile personal correspondence with Mr. Finger, which was the cause of his suggesting I was an unworthy upholder of First Amendment rights since I, according to him, "suggested that the ADL, not being a Catholic organization, has no right to express an opinion about his play."

Yes, they have a right to express an opinion about anything, but I had written to Mr. Finger that I considered the ADL's condemnation of my play as "misrepresentative of the Catholic faith" to be an *arrogant* opinion. I based my opinions in the play on my 12 years in Catholic school. I was taught the things I wrote about in that play, as were scores of other Catholics and ex-Catholics who have strongly identified with my play. On what do Mr. Finger and the ADL base their opinion?

I had hoped in my correspondence with Mr. Finger that he might consider Michael Feingold's view (in *The Village Voice*): "If Catholics can't cope with a serious satire by a writer raised in that faith, that's sad, but such intramural debate is hardly the Anti-Defamation League's business."

Needless to say, Mr. Finger did not agree.

CHRISTOPHER DURANG
New York, New York

WHO ARE THE CONTRAS?

To the editors:

Edgar Chamorro would have us believe that Nicaragua's "idealistic young people . . . are being used as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy by the CIA . . . and Somocista politicians who simply want to go back to Nicaragua to get back the money and power they lost in 1979" ("Confessions of a Contra," August 5). Arturo Cruz says, "Congress is sadly wrong if it imagines that it can obtain peace by cutting off aid to the Nicaraguan insurgents. The insurgency is no longer a product of United States intervention; it is the revolt of Nicaraguans against oppression by other Nicaraguans." I believe that Mr. Chamorro stands virtually alone with the Sandinistas in his judgment.

There was a time when the *contras* were a small band largely dependent on the CIA and ex-National Guardsmen. At that time it was not supported by prominent Democratic leaders such as Arturo Cruz, or ex-Sandinista patriots such as Edén Pastora (whose only complaint about the FDN *contras* now is that they are willing to negotiate with the Sandinistas). Nor were they connected with leftist political parties, such as the Independent Liberal Party.

Today the resistance movement consists of every democratic political party, free labor union, and business coalition in Nicaragua. The church has offered to mediate a true national dialogue leading to free elections in Nicaragua. And the people overwhelmingly support the church and oppose the government.

It is hard to understand why THE NEW REPUBLIC, which has been so supportive of true national reconciliation in Nicaragua, would lend its pages to a traitor whose idea of reconciliation is "the abolition of the *contra* army." Clearly, there could be no quicker path to the permanent Sandinista dictatorship, which the Nicaraguan people reject. No friend of democracy would advocate such a solution, certainly not Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the most revered man in Nicaragua today.

DAN BURTON
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

MADONNAPHILIA

To the editors:

I have not spent the last year in a coma. And yet, if it weren't for writers like Joel Schwartz continually suggesting that I have ("Virgin Territory," August 26), and pointing out what I thus have been missing, I would never have heard of Madonna, or any of the others. I had never heard of Boy George until he was on the cover of *Newsweek*. "Live Aid" was something I found out about the day after it was over. To my knowledge, I have never heard the songs Mr. Schwartz cites, "Like a Virgin" and "Material Girl," nor do I particularly aspire to.

If, just 50 or 60 years down the road, people are still listening to Madonna recordings and attending Madonna concerts (performed as, say, Mozart is not), I'll regretfully go to my grave having missed witnessing a living classic. Until then, maybe a proper coma is preferable to the somnabulism of a Madonnaphile.

MATTHEW CUSH
Ruston, Louisiana

To the editors:

Hats off to Joel D. Schwartz for his beautifully written article on Madonna. I must disagree with him, however, on his final point. Schwartz writes that "Madonna's fans are learning that maturity is superficiality, that to be grown-up is to have perfected one's repertoire of roles." It seems to me that it is precisely Madonna's adolescent quality that makes her so attractive to teenage girls. Teenagers typically vacillate freely and often unpredictably between feelings of childhood innocence and adult sexuality. Madonna is less a role model to her fans than an expression and a personification of their own emotional schizophrenia.

JAY ROSENBAUM
Trenton, New Jersey

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
SEPTEMBER 30, 1985

FREE TO SHOES

In 1977 President Carter decided to give embattled American shoe manufacturers some breathing room. He eased the pressure from foreign shoe imports so that domestic firms could sharpen their competitive edge. That was the rationale, at any rate, for quotas on footwear imports negotiated with Korea and Taiwan. The price of shoes for American consumers rose, of course, but the shoe industry was being "saved." In 1981 the quotas expired. And guess what? Four years of protection from foreign competition left shoe manufacturers weaker than ever.

In August the shoe industry was back again, pleading for harsh, new quotas on foreign imports. This time it was fortified with a recommendation for quotas from the U.S. International Trade Commission. The shoe industry figured to exploit the protectionist hysteria that is sweeping Washington. Cheap imports are wiping out thousands of American jobs, the industry argued. But President Reagan said no to shoe quotas. It was an act of political courage—one Reagan may have to repeat again and again this fall to spare the nation a binge of potentially ruinous protectionism.

Given a trade deficit likely to reach a record $160 billion this year, can curbs on imports be all that bad? And won't they prod other countries to relax their trade barriers, thus promoting the sale of American goods overseas and energizing the American economy? The answers are no, no, and no. Quotas didn't help shoe manufacturers. It wasn't until well after they were jettisoned in 1981 that the industry began to show signs of recovery. In almost every case foreign competition, rather than protection from it, is a better spur to an industry to shape up.

There is a scary precedent for what is happening in Washington this fall: the Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1929. Smoot-Hawley may not have caused the Depression, but that tariff mightily contributed to it. In 1985 a tariff war would have a disastrous effect on a fragile world economy. Nations like Brazil that are struggling to pay off prodigious debts by maximizing exports (particularly to the United States) would be doomed. After Smoot-Hawley was enacted, more than 50 countries imposed stiff tariffs of their own. And as Reagan said in defending his shoe decision, the tariff war "helped plunge this nation and the world into a decade of depression and despair."

Yet protectionist sentiment springs eternal, especially in Washington. Most politicians know it's a bad idea, but they face a daunting dilemma. The beneficiaries of any particular act of protectionism are identifiable groups of people, often geographically concentrated and politically organized. The harm of protectionism is spread across the whole economy, and the biggest losers (would-be jobholders in export industries, for example) don't even know who they are. As a result, there is powerful political pressure for a series of individual protectionist measures that, taken together, are devastating for us all.

Democrats have grasped protectionism as a red-white-and-blue issue that puts them in harmony with rising nationalistic feeling. It might revive their party, some Democrats gush. The Democratic centerpiece is legislation introduced by three of the party's congressional honchos: Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas and Representatives Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois and Richard Gephardt of Missouri. It would slap a 25 percent duty on imports from countries with sizable trade surpluses with the United States.

Republicans are succumbing too. Senator John Danforth of Missouri wants to compel the president to take strong action against Japanese imports. In his new book, *The Courage of a Conservative*, former interior secretary James Watt calls for a "market access fee" on countries that export manufactured goods to the United States—a sure ticket to worldwide recession. But at least Watt is aboveboard. Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, on the other hand, pays lip service to free trade, saying Congress shouldn't start a "protectionist derby." But in early September, when Reagan ordered investigations into supposedly unfair trade practices by three countries and set a December 1 deadline for resolution of trade disputes with two others, Dole maintained it wasn't enough. "We have to do more" to satisfy protectionist sentiment, he said.

Perhaps we're grasping at straws, but there's some evidence that voters are more sophisticated about the benefits of trade than politicians think. John Connally thought a call

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for trade curbs would give him the Republican presidential nomination in 1980. Instead, it brought him one delegate. Walter Mondale took up the protectionist cause in 1984. It got him nowhere. In a special congressional election in Texas last August, Democrats exulted that the trade issue brought them victory. Not quite. Protectionism didn't decide the race; the Republican candidate's inexperience did.

The special pressures the trade issue puts on politicians with local constituencies mean that this is a subject on which national leadership is especially required. In the end, in other words, the choice between free trade and protectionism rests with the president. The Oval Office may be flooded with protectionist bills this fall. Reagan is hinting at vetoes, and Special Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter has all but promised one on a measure to slash textile imports.

This is not to say that the trade deficit isn't a serious problem; only that protectionism will make it worse, not better. Since Reagan's own fiscal deficits have done so much to aggravate the problem, by leading to an overvalued dollar, it's especially incumbent on him to resist the protectionist palliative that he knows will only make things worse.

Reagan has talked free trade before and then done the opposite. In 1981 he set a quota on Japanese auto imports, and he has also shielded the steel, textile, and motorcycle industries from foreign competition. Now is the time for the president to let his actions match his words.

NOTEBOOK

□ HAVING THREATENED A VETO of legislation imposing economic sanctions on South Africa, President Reagan now has imposed virtually the same sanctions by administrative fiat. Why the change of heart? Presumably his ostensible compassion for the innocent blacks who will lose their jobs has not lessened. Obviously the main cause was fear of a humiliating congressional defeat. But at least one argument against sanctions has been destroyed irrevocably over the past few weeks. That is the world-weary assertion that economic pressure is futile because the South African economy is so isolated and independent. The collapse of the rand, the country's once haughty currency, and the Pretoria government's panicked reaction show beyond all doubt that South Africa is indeed subject to economic forces outside its control, much like any other society. The current government desperately needs the confidence and support of the international business community. This is the outside world's lever against apartheid.

□ THE MAN IN THE HATHAWAY SHIRT, in an ad in the *New York Times* men's fashion supplement September 8, is none other than John Connally. "Dynamic, determined, a national presence in law, government and business," and there to illustrate Hathaway's slogan that "every man has his own management style." When Connally became a Republican (shortly after heading Democrats for Nixon in 1972), Frank Mankiewicz remarked that his defection "raises the intellectual level of both parties." Perhaps not; Connally's no fool. Better to have said the moral level. Sporting Hathaway's trademark black eye patch, Connally looks suitably like a pirate. What next? A Dewar's Profile of Richard Nixon?

□ JUMPING THE GUN, MISSING THE POINT: An editor's error in Rosemarie Zagarri's article "Founding Intentions" (September 9) prematurely announced 1985 as the bicentennial of the Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty. In fact, the statute, while introduced in October 1785, was not signed into law until January 21, 1786. In the same issue a sentence was accidentally dropped from Robert Kuttner's article "Loophole Logic," about the construction industry campaign against tax reform. After pointing out that the plan does not touch the home mortgage interest deduction, the article should have continued: "The tax plan does, however, include less generous depreciation for rental apartment buildings. It ends the use of tax-free municipal bonds to finance housing construction . . . ," etc.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

FALL DEFENSIVE

IS RONALD REAGAN'S presidency really crumbling? Breathless stories on bad blood between the White House and Congress this fall suggest as much. According to Jack Nelson of *The Los Angeles Times*, Reagan "faces a critical period that may determine the success or failure of his second term and ultimately the fate of his presidency." What's worse, Nelson wrote, "a lapse into the kind of ineffectual stalemate that humbled Reagan's four immediate predecessors could leave the nation rudderless at a time when it faces serious challenges at home and abroad."

For all the melodrama, Nelson was expressing a widely held view in Washington and the political community. Even White House aides talk ominously about the president's difficulties. Patrick J. Buchanan, Reagan's conservative communications chief, believes the White House desperately needs an early victory in Congress to gain some political momentum. Sustaining a veto on South African sanctions—that is, getting a mere one-third plus one of the votes in one house of Congress—would suffice, Buchanan figures. A win like that would spur other victories.

Buchanan is wrong. There is no way for Reagan to avoid getting bruised in his so-called fall offensive. It's really a fall defensive, for the president has lost control over most of the agenda. And what's bubbling up from Congress are initiatives that Reagan opposes—not only tougher eco-

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nomic sanctions against South Africa than those he reluctantly adopted, but also protectionist measures, lavish farm price supports, and appropriations bills that exceed the budget resolution. "And those aren't the only things we'll have to fight over," says a White House official. "There's the debt ceiling and Superfund, too."

Not to worry. What's needed is a sense of proportion, which is normally in short supply in Washington. Fights over trade and spending and the debt limit are perennials; every president battles with Congress over them. But a year from now, this fall's struggles, save one, will be forgotten. And win or lose, the president's standing in history will not be greatly affected, except in a single instance. Besides, Reagan probably won't win or lose anyway. As long as the disagreements don't involve paramount issues, he'll compromise. That's his style, and he displayed it again on September 9 when he knuckled under to congressional pressure and invoked mild economic sanctions against South Africa.

What matters on Reagan's domestic agenda is the one item over which he has considerable control: tax reform. This is an issue of historical importance. John F. Kennedy came to the White House in 1961 with visions of overhauling the tax code. All he got was a tax cut. Jimmy Carter made tax reform one of the major talking points of his presidential campaign in 1976. Six months into his presidency, the effort had been abandoned as hopeless. Indeed, with Carter as president, it was hopeless. With Reagan, it isn't.

You'd never know this from the chatter on Capitol Hill and in the press. The success of tax reform, the story goes, is entirely dependent on a massive ground swell of public support, which hasn't occurred. Once again, the White House agrees with this flawed approach; it is trying to touch off a wave of national enthusiasm for the president's tax-reform bill. In truth, the president's aides needn't bother, for tax reform has all the support it needs from two men: Ronald Reagan and Representative Dan Rostenkowski, the Illinois Democrat who runs the Ways and Means Committee. And Rostenkowski is eager to get a bill roughly similar to Reagan's—top rate on individual income about 35 percent, personal exemption doubled to $2,000, etc.—through the House by mid-October.

What's to stop it? Nothing, really, once Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III and his deputy, Richard Darman, make a few judicious compromises on sensitive issues like the deductibility of state and local taxes. They'll allow some, but not much, deductibility. They'll also yield on capital gains, on which Democrats may move the tax rate from 17.5 percent in the Reagan plan to 22.5 percent, and on accelerated depreciation, but not on the basic rate structure for individuals. Despite lobbying pressure from every conceivable special interest, public clamor for tax reform won't be required. A strange political dynamic has overtaken the issue. Members of Congress don't need to be enthusiastic about tax reform; after all, Reagan isn't crazy about some of the tax hikes that his business pals will have to swallow. Senators and representatives need only be afraid to vote against it. They are. Just ask House Speaker Tip O'Neill, who is determined to deprive Reagan of the opportunity to blame Democrats during next year's congressional campaign for having blocked tax reform.

Oddly enough, tax reform faces its biggest hurdle in the Republican Senate. Majority Leader Robert Dole, who thrives on friction with the White House, runs hot and cold on the issue. Administration officials early on found Rostenkowski to be far more sympathetic, and they've courted him almost exclusively. The political calculation behind this strategy is not complicated: if the House approves tax reform, the pressure on the Senate to do the same will be enormous. Dole, whatever his qualms, won't find a politically acceptable escape route. So he'll be left with ushering a major tax-reform measure through the Senate. If he balks, Reagan will demand an up or down vote; Dole will have to comply. At least that's what White House and Treasury officials think.

Still, they are jittery. "You've got to wait for the right moment for Dole," says an administration official who's dealt with him. "Tax reform isn't real for him yet." Dole and Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, conferred over lunch September 6, but according to Dole little progress was made. Asked what happened in the session, he said, "Not much." The next two days, Baker and Darman met with Rostenkowski and the full Ways and Means Committee at a retreat 50 miles south of Washington. It went swimmingly; there was no indication of major dissatisfaction with the Reagan proposal. Eight academics lectured the crew, and at the end of the session they expressed a preference for the Reagan bill or current tax law. Seven, including liberal economist Joseph Pechman, voted for the bill and one voted against—Martin Feldstein, the former chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

And there's another reason for optimism on tax reform: recent memory. In 1981 you could count on both hands the number of senators who favored a three-year cut in personal income tax rates—in other words, the Reagan tax cut. Certainly then-majority leader Howard Baker wasn't an enthusiastic supporter. Democratic leaders in the House were dead set against it. The newspapers were filled with familiar stories of senators and representatives who found only indifference to a tax cut back home. And Reagan never saw his way clear to campaign around the country for his tax cut; now, of course, a week doesn't pass when he isn't barnstorming for tax reform. Despite the discouraging signs in 1981, the tax cut got nearly 90 votes in the Senate and sailed through the House. Just as some Reaganites are dubious of tax reform now, there were many in the administration who thought the 1981 tax bill was flawed and risky. But that was what Reagan wanted, and that is what he got.

All the nicks and scratches accumulated in routine legislative fights this fall will seem insignificant if tax reform passes. And why not? They are insignificant. Reagan can lose every fight but tax reform and still come out ahead. Lucky fellow that he is, Reagan stands a good chance of doing exactly that.

FRED BARNES

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Do the Founding Fathers know best?

REAGAN'S CONSTITUTION

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION and its friends have been invoking history—what our country's founders and our Constitution's framers originally intended—to pursue a profoundly un-American and ahistoric vision of law and politics. Our Constitution, according to this vision, is blind to race and reproductive freedom, but attuned to religion. Affirmative action to redress racism is thus to be discarded, the wall of separation between church and state eroded, and the reproductive freedom of women wiped away.

The advocates of these quite radical moves argue that those who oppose such changes are wedded to a doctrine that the Supreme Court should never overrule its precedents. Witness, for example, George Will's recent column "reminding" liberals that the civil rights movement was, after all, a campaign to reverse the Supreme Court of the 19th century. But no one has forgotten that, and surely no one believes that it is automatically wrong for the Court to retrace its steps and retreat from a misguided line of cases.

The objection to the Justice Department's efforts to persuade judges to end affirmative action, endorse school prayer, and restore state power to ban abortions is not that all precedents are sacred, but that the particular precedents the department is trying to topple have come to represent vital and valid elements of our constitutional heritage. Nor were those precedents, even when first proclaimed, alien to our origins as a nation. On the contrary, we fought a revolution and adopted a Bill of Rights in large part to separate government from such personal matters as the individual's relationship with God—and our most intimate relations with one another. And we fought a Civil War, and adopted the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, in large part to enlist government in ending America's sorry legacy of slavery and apartheid.

The principal retort of the president's lawyers is that the quite specific "original intent" of those who wrote and ratified the 1787 Constitution and its first ten amendments, as well as the amendments enacted at the close of the Civil War, was flouted by the Supreme Court when it insisted that religious and governmental authority be separated, that government be empowered to set aside places for racial minorities to redress past discrimination, and that women be free to decide for themselves whether to continue a pregnancy.

This argument is unconvincing on its own terms, and, in any event, wholly inconclusive. Even the administration's interpretation of history is open to serious question. As to affirmative action, for example, those who wrote the 14th Amendment created the Freedmen's Bureau specifically to assist blacks. More important, the relevance of historic intent is open to grave doubt. Does the administration believe such entirely sensible law enforcement techniques as the stop and frisk practices of modern police departments must end simply because those who wrote the Fourth Amendment's ban on unreasonable searches and seizures would never have approved of those practices? Does the administration believe that, because those who wrote the Fifth Amendment's ban against compulsory self-incrimination would have been shocked at the idea of compelling testimony under a grant of immunity, that quite reasonable prosecutorial practice must stop? Or is the resort to "original intent" a selective one, a cynical substitution of polemics for serious analysis, to be invoked only when it suits the administration's political purposes?

The truth is that those who wrote the Constitution and its amendments tolerated many practices—including the forced separation of the races in public schools and in marriage, the banishment of women from public and professional life, and the maintenance of official state churches—that the Constitution's majestic guarantees of freedom and equality have since been rightly understood to condemn. The Framers also frowned on more than a few practices that the Constitution's deliberately ambiguous language has since been understood to permit.

IT IS NEITHER an accident nor a perversion of the Constitution's plan that the original assumptions of its authors have not controlled its evolving meaning. On the contrary, when those who opposed the 1787 Constitution in the ratification debates charged that the Framers' private sentiments and assumptions would become authoritative guides to its interpretation, the Constitution's proponents emphatically replied that nothing the Framers *or* ratifiers merely "intended" or "supposed," but failed to enact, would direct the Constitution's future. Even when evidence of the Framers' intent appears to support a progressive reading of the Constitution—as some seek to show with respect to separation of church and state, for example (see "Founding Intentions" by Rosemarie Zagarri, September 9)—we must resist equating the ideas of the Constitution's creators as individuals with the meaning of the Constitution itself as a body of law. The text, its structure, and its animating spirit, as gradually discerned by a courageous and independent judiciary—these, according to such proponents as Hamilton and Madison, would be decisive. Indeed, in 1796 the Annals of Congress record it as James Madison's view that, however "venerable" the Constitution's Framers, what they merely *thought* or even *said* "could *never* be regarded as the oracular guide in expounding the Constitution."

No other approach would have permitted the Constitution to have a meaning that unfolded over time rather than one frozen by the time-bound notions of its authors and ratifiers. Only by rejecting the obsession with "origi-

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nal intent" in this fixed and private sense were the Framers able to bequeath to us what John Marshall, the greatest chief justice, was later to describe as a framework that would "endure for the ages"—a Constitution that Woodrow Wilson once called "a living organism."

It is difficult to believe that the administration is ignorant of these fundamental truths. Far more likely, it is manipulating the appeal to original intent in order to give a gloss of respectability and a patina of neutrality to a particular social vision that is unconcerned with racial justice and the plight of the oppressed, that is quick to disapprove the tragic choice of women who find themselves unable to continue a pregnancy, and that yearns to prop up the waning authority of the state with the symbols of the church.

It is said that this is what the "majority" voted for in November 1984. But the Constitution is a bulwark against any temporary majority's tyranny. And, even if everyone who voted for Mr. Reagan would endorse this vision—a dubious premise—surely it represents no enduring majority in a nation that will, I am convinced, eventually return to the principles of tolerance and diversity that have been at the core of its greatness. Until then, the best that can be done by those who believe as I do is to resist loudly when narrowness and intolerance masquerade as conservatism, principle, and fidelity to history.

LAURENCE H. TRIBE

Laurence H. Tribe is the Tyler Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard University. His latest book, *God Save This Honorable Court* (Random House), is being published in October.

Mystery man of the Reagan Doctrine.

PRIVATE GENERAL

FORMER MAJOR GENERAL John K. Singlaub is the bridge between top Reagan administration officials and a little-known international organization, some of whose members only a few years ago closed their meetings with extended-arm Nazi salutes. Under Singlaub's leadership the World Anti-Communist League has emerged from lunatic fringe obscurity to win new respectability. Indeed, as the league's annual convention opened in Dallas last week, delegates expected warm greetings from President Reagan. In the course of transforming WACL, Singlaub has also played a major role in Reagan's foreign policy. The so-called Reagan Doctrine, the policy of aiding anticommunist rebels in the Third World, was official WACL policy long before it was even a gleam in Ronald Reagan's eye.

Singlaub is not just another freelance adventurer who has wandered down to Central America. He operates at the hub of a private support network that works closely with the White House and is made up of anticommunist organizations, financiers such as William Simon and Joseph Coors, and military adventurers. During the last two years these activists have raised money, offered tactical advice, shipped matériel, and procured arms for a new breed of American allies in the Third World. Last year, when Congress cut off aid to rebels fighting Nicaragua's Sandinista regime, Singlaub helped raise an estimated $25 million in private donations for the *contras*. At the same time, he was meeting with officials of the National Security Council.

The former general is also an accomplished soldier whose expertise in unconventional warfare earned him 33 commendations in a 35-year career. During the Vietnam War he directed commando units known as "Spike Teams" that fought behind enemy lines—operations the *contras* are now performing in Nicaragua. His hawkish political views got him in trouble in 1977 when he publicly criticized Jimmy Carter, and he retired from the military soon after.

Singlaub and WACL came together in 1980. The league had been founded by the government of Taiwan in 1967 as an adjunct to its foreign service. It was to serve as an "anticommunist united front" to support "materially and spiritually" the worldwide struggle against Soviet and Chinese imperialism. Dr. Ku Cheng-kang, a high-level member of Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party, was put in charge. Now 86 years old, he is WACL's honorary "chairman for life," but Singlaub says, "Everybody [in WACL] bows to his wishes, or listens to him at any rate."

After attending two league meetings in 1980 and 1981, Singlaub decided that it could be more than just a "meet, eat, and retreat" group that engaged in handwringing over the communist threat. In 1981 he received a $16,500 loan from the Taiwanese to establish a new American chapter, the United States Council for World Freedom. Singlaub also set out to clean up the league's image—no easy task.

THE INITIAL U.S. chapter of WACL had been formed in 1969 by leaders of the so-called China Lobby, who had long supported Taiwan against the communist government in Peking. But six years later the American chapter renounced its membership because, as an internal memo reported, the league was being taken over by "neo-Nazi, ex-Nazi, fascist, neo-fascist, and anti-Semitic groups." Dr. Ku had been alerted about the extremists as early as 1972. Nonetheless, he insisted that the fascists and the antifascists work together against their common enemy, the communists.

In 1975 Roger Pearson, a British-born anthropologist who theorizes about the natural superiority of the Aryan race, formed a new U.S. chapter and two years later was

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voted the league's chairman. Pearson and a man named Earl Thomas, described by *The Washington Post* as a "former Nazi Party stormtrooper," then began to organize the league's 1978 convention. When Pearson and the league's executive committee met in Los Angeles in December 1977, Dr. Ku flew in to attend. The day before that meeting Dr. Ku met with failed presidential aspirant Ronald Reagan, and the two were photographed together for the league's official publication.

The White House press office has not responded to inquiries about the circumstances of the meeting. But, like Republican senators James McClure and Jake Garn, who were featured speakers at the league's 1978 convention in Washington, D.C., Reagan probably did not know about the neo-Nazism concealed behind the league's anticommunist rhetoric.

The league's extremism was not just theoretical. In Latin America many WACL chapters were funded by right-wing dictatorships. A favorite target was the progressive sector of the Catholic Church. At the league's conference in Buenos Aires in September 1980, delegates unanimously approved a resolution demanding the expulsion of the Jesuits from the hemisphere. Several of the military officers who hosted the meeting are now on trial in Argentina for their role in the "dirty war" in which thousands of civilians were killed.

One of the delegates in Buenos Aires was Roberto d'Aubuisson, then a rising young politician whose connection with El Salvador's right-wing death squads would soon win him international notoriety. D'Aubuisson told me in a 1982 interview that while he was there he had arranged for Argentine intelligence operatives to come to El Salvador. These advisers helped Salvadorans set up safe houses out of which death squad operations were run.

SINGLAUB SAYS that when he joined the league he began to investigate the background of some of the chapters, and told Dr. Ku that "if it were as bad as it appeared, we would have to disassociate." He says he soon found out the situation was even worse than he thought: before resigning in 1980, Roger Pearson had sponsored for league membership a number of neo-Nazi groups, including a "veterans' organization of SS." When asked why Dr. Ku had tolerated a decade of neo-Nazi activity, Singlaub says that the Taiwanese claimed they had not known of Pearson's racial theories and had been misled by the graciousness of the Latin Americans. "And I don't know whether anybody had translated their writings into Chinese," he added.

In any case, Singlaub demanded that Dr. Ku expel the whole Latin American chapter, and Dr. Ku complied. Singlaub's goal was to make the league an "action agency" by making sure that the 120 chapters represented real conservative constituencies in their countries. At the league's 1982 convention in Tokyo, for example, Singlaub read a message of support from Reagan, the first ever from an American president. He then delivered his own speech on the necessity of relying on unconventional warfare to counter the Soviets. To WACL delegates it appeared that Singlaub's message carried Reagan's endorsement.

Officially, of course, it did not. But since 1982 the differences between Singlaub's views and administration policy have grown steadily smaller. In May 1983 Reagan described the *contras* as "freedom fighters" for the first time, adopting the term that league members (and others on the right) have long used. Several months later the league decided to provide "military aid to resistants in subject nations," a policy that the administration was still reluctant to promote publicly. But the administration was willing to call on Singlaub's expertise. For example, Under Secretary for Defense Fred Ikle appointed Singlaub in 1984 to head a committee studying U.S responses to the insurgency in El Salvador. Its conclusions are classified, but Singlaub says it recommended that the U.S. rely more on unconventional warfare and that it train Salvadoran security forces in counterinsurgency techniques (which is prohibited by law).

To get around such restrictions, citizen Singlaub says he founded an organization in Boulder, Colorado, to advise the Salvadoran armed forces. Singlaub says he kept the Pentagon fully apprised of what he was doing. The Salvadoran police apparently got their training from another country, but Singlaub's outfit did send retired military officers to train Salvadorans in the field.

When Congress cut off *contra* funding last year, Singlaub switched to fund-raising for the Nicaraguan resistance. He says that he informally used WACL's international contacts to raise the money to buy arms. He says he not only stopped receiving Pentagon help, but even stopped going to the Pentagon. "I'm afraid someone will see me there and say, 'Ah, he's come to get guidance.' "

Singlaub claims he acted all along as a private citizen, but he clearly enjoyed an open door to top policymakers. At the 1984 convention Singlaub, now chairman of the league, again delivered a message of support from Reagan: "WACL has long played a leadership role in drawing attention to the gallant struggle now being waged by the true freedom fighters of the day." Singlaub followed by urging delegates to go beyond supporting the freedom fighters in their own regions. They had to "develop plans of action to support the resistance movements in other regions of the world as well." The former general concluded by telling the delegates, "Your effectiveness will be measured in 1985 by how well you carry out the plans."

Under Reagan, WACL members have been appointed to ambassadorships in the Bahamas, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. Congress has restored "humanitarian" funding to the *contras* and repealed the Clark amendment prohibiting aid to forces battling the left-wing government of Angola. Clearly, Singlaub's own effectiveness has been measured.

CRAIG PYES

Craig Pyes is an associate of the Center for Investigative Reporting.

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ON THE HILL

MEDIA SPECTER

IN FEBRUARY Senator Arlen Specter wanted to hold hearings on Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele, and he wasn't going to be deterred by the fact that he is only chairman of the Senate subcommittee on juvenile justice. Strom Thurmond, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, failed to see the connection between the Nazi doctor and teenagers in trouble and had declined to authorize the hearings. But Specter persisted, and Thurmond finally relented. The first two hearings attracted so much media attention that Specter asked Thurmond to allow him to hold a third. When Thurmond adamantly refused, Specter took his show on the road, holding a meeting with Holocaust survivors in Philadelphia. Because Thurmond had refused authorization, the third hearing had no formal connection to the subcommittee, the Judiciary Committee, or the Senate. Nevertheless, Specter declared in his opening statement that the hearings were official subcommittee business, and the press duly reported them as such. "A spokesman for Specter said the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee was involved with the search for Mengele," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* noted solemnly, "because of the experiments he conducted on children."

Arlen Specter, Republican of Pennsylvania, is the model of how to build a Senate career through manipulation of the media. Others in the world's greatest deliberative body, such as South Dakota Republican Larry Pressler, have reputations based mostly on press releases. But Specter brings new and impressive audacity to senatorial hype. He is an intelligent freshman senator with moderate political instincts who has received an unprecedented amount of highly favorable media coverage. And if the justifications for the publicity are dubious, the benefits are worthwhile. After the Mengele hearings, Jewish groups in Miami and Los Angeles held fund-raisers for Specter's 1986 reelection campaign, raising tens of thousands of dollars.

Specter's political career began in 1965 when he ran for district attorney and won, the first time in more than two decades that a Republican had won citywide office in Philadelphia. Hardly a day went by during Specter's stint in which he didn't hold a news conference, announce some new investigation, or release a statement to the press. William Meehan, a close friend of the senator and the longtime head of Philadelphia's Republican Party, said, "Someone spills a can of beans, Arlen'll issue a statement."

Specter realized that he could make headlines by announcing some new, sensational investigation or the formation of a new grand jury, and that few reporters would ever take him to task if those same investigations uncovered no wrongdoing or produced no indictments. After the roof of the Spectrum, Philadelphia's sports arena, blew off in a rainstorm in 1968, Specter announced he was going "to blow the lid off City Hall" in an investigation of who was responsible. He received dozens of favorable stories. "The *Daily News* has learned that District Attorney Arlen Specter may be on the verge of making 'Big Arrests' in connection with his investigation of . . . the $12 million arena," reported the Philadelphia *Daily News*, which often received such "exclusives" from Specter. Only one individual, a minor City Hall functionary, was ever indicted, and charges against him were eventually dismissed.

One rare critical story about Specter appeared in 1973, when *The Philadelphia Inquirer* conducted a detailed study of Philadelphia's criminal justice system that compared Specter's performance with his rhetoric. Specter had received glowing coverage for personally prosecuting a rape case in his first term and for his numerous press conferences on rape. "Rape Terms Too Light, Says Specter" and "10 Rape Trials Planned Daily to Cut Backlog" were typical of the headlines he won. The *Inquirer* found that, despite his tough talk on criminals and on lenient judges, "Specter . . . posted one of the poorest conviction rates in the nation. In fact, it may very well be the worst. . . . Specter's office is as responsible as judges for the lenient treatment of many defendants." The story reported that, especially in rape cases, too often "the charges [were] dismissed, the defendants found innocent—often because of faulty investigations or trial delays."

SPECTER RAN for mayor in 1969 and narrowly lost. He ran for a third term as district attorney in 1973 and lost. In 1976 he lost the Republican senatorial primary, and in 1978 he lost the gubernatorial primary. Only in 1980 did he win the Senate seat.

When Specter came to Washington, he shrewdly began a campaign to change his image, if not his performance, as a limelight hog. "He knew he had a problem in this area," says an aide; "so we were told then whenever interviewed by the press we were to hammer away again and again as to what a low-key, behind-the-scenes type of job he was doing. We were told to be as subtle as possible." Specter told me he was "proceeding in a slow and methodical way to learn a new job. . . . I read a lot of biographies of a lot of senators and it did take some time to learn the protocol. I would say there's a significant difference in the approach I have in Washington in contrast with being a DA in Philadelphia." The gangbusters prosecutor image was replaced with the persona of the thoughtful senator.

The media have bought the "new Arlen Specter." The *Philadelphia Bulletin* said Specter devoted his "first eight months [in office] to reading histories of the Senate, listening, asking questions, and learning." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that, although Specter had once courted the press, as a senator he was "low-key, more evenly modulated." *The Washington Post* described Specter as a

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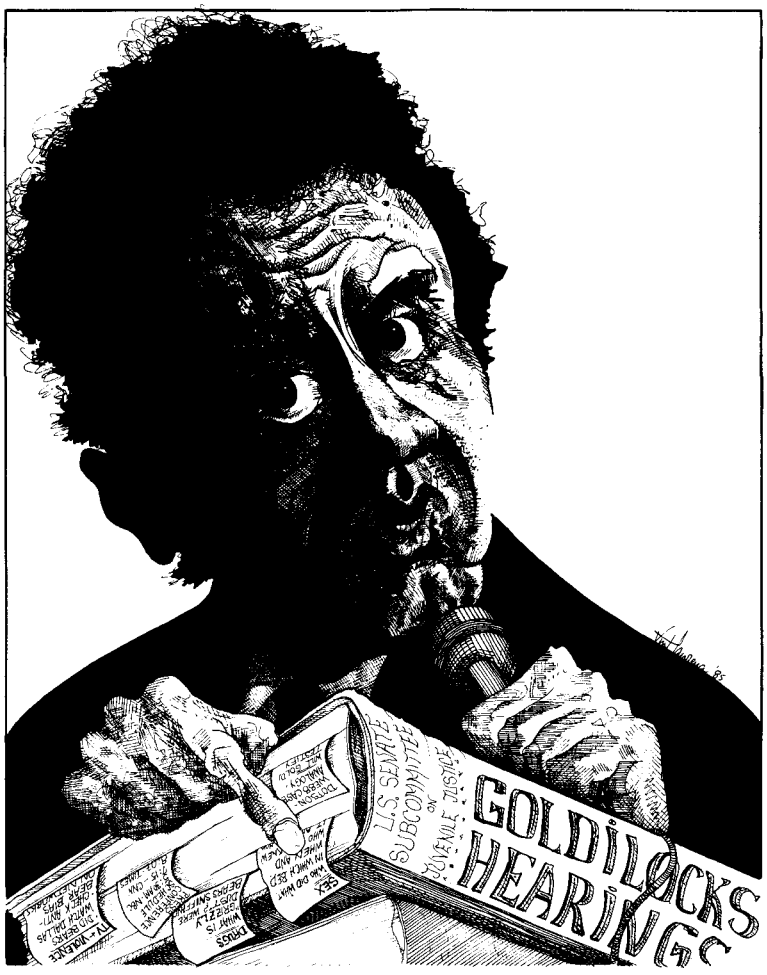
"brainy, intense, rumpled lawyer and former district attorney. He brings great intensity to his issues as well as his campaigning."

Specter now has the best of both worlds. His new reputation in no way hinders his old penchant for showboating. He has been shrewd in his selection of witnesses at hearings: former porn star Linda Lovelace, the jurors who passed judgment on John Hinckley and on Cathleen Webb, even Captain Kangaroo (who criticized violence on TV), have all testified. One result has been that his subcommittee has received even more press coverage than its parent Judiciary Committee. "There's the big four," explains a former aide to Specter. "The four major subjects that Specter knows will rope in the television cameras: kids, sex, drugs, and violence. If you can have a hearing that combines two or more of those elements, you'll get even greater coverage."



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Among the hearings Specter has chaired: news coverage of the Bedford rape case (sex and violence); the Gary Dotson-Cathleen Webb rape recantation case (sex and violence); the Hinckley insanity plea (violence); teenage suicide (drugs, kids, and violence); violence on television (kids and violence); and the sexual abuse of teenage runaways (sex, violence, and kids). "The subjects he chooses often are not even the remotest bit related to anything to do with juvenile justice," says a senior aide on the Judiciary Committee. "He leaves it up to his poor staff to come up with some supposed connection. When he held a hearing with Cathleen Webb, he told us the relevance was that the incident occurred while she was still a minor."

Specter's hearings on the effect of pornography on women and children was an adroit combination of all four elements. The star witness was Linda Lovelace, first made famous for her role in *Deep Throat*, who told the committee that her boyfriend had forced her into pornography and prostitution with a semiautomatic M-16 machine gun. Specter invited two of the pornography industry's biggest stars, Veronica Vera and "Seka," to respond to Lovelace's charges. "I have been a part of the adult film industry for eight years. . . ," Seka told Specter. "During this time . . . I have never known anyone who was coerced, forced, or otherwise compelled to do anything against their will." Vera added: "It is real movie-making. There is feeling of camaraderie and pride."

Vera read her statement from a prepared text. "I am the love toy, the object of your desires, exposed and vulnerable," Vera explained. "Picture yourself tying the ropes, keeping me as your prisoner, to be taken whenever you want, always open to—" She paused.

"Should I go on?" she asked.

Specter, who had a copy of her text in front of him, replied, "You certainly may." The long and explicit description of intercourse, bondage, and sadomasochism that followed had little do with juvenile justice. The television cameras recorded the scene in full.

Specter's antics finally prompted Illinois Democrat Paul Simon to violate Senate etiquette by publicly criticizing his colleague. In April Simon denounced Specter's plans to hold hearings on the Dotson-Webb case. "This subcommittee has no role in addressing guilt or innocence, or justification for trying to influence a state judicial matter. . . . We should not allow the potential for a few headlines and 30 seconds on television to divert our attention from our real problems." A Specter spokesman says Specter met with Simon after the statement and that Simon was "satisfied with the scope of the hearings." Simon says he stands by his criticism.

As a moderate Republican from the Northeast, Specter can be a swing vote in legislative battles between the administration and the Democrats. During the MX debate earlier this year, a low-level White House aide mentioned in a tip to *The New York Times* that President Reagan would not help to raise money for any Republican senator who voted against the missile's funding. For the next several weeks Specter did not disclose how he was going

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to vote. The night before the vote, television crews camped out in front of his condominium to wait for his decision. Specter played Hamlet again in May when it became clear that his would be the crucial vote in the Judiciary Committee on the confirmation of William Bradford Reynolds. He ultimately voted against Reynolds, killing the nomination.

Specter continues to push hard for any media opportunity. This spring Pennsylvania Democratic representative Tom Foglietta spent weeks arranging a press conference to denounce the Pentagon's closing of the Philadelphia Naval Yard. Specter announced his own plans at the last minute and scheduled a press conference at the Yard one hour before Foglietta was to appear. More than one member of the congressional Vietnam Era Veterans Caucus was taken aback when Specter applied for membership; he served in Korea but was not in the service during the Vietnam War. He was turned down. (His Democratic opponent in 1986, incidentally, may well be Pennsylvania state auditor Don Bailey, a highly decorated Vietnam veteran.)

FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES often privately lament that Specter does not apply his intelligence more constructively. *The Almanac of American Politics* rates him "competent" and his work for the District of Columbia subcommittee is an improvement over his predecessors'. But overall, Specter's legislative record is undistinguished. After the TWA hijacking, Specter introduced legislation making it legal for the United States to abduct terrorists abroad and bring them here to stand trial. A State Department official calls the legislation "downright silly." As the department's legal adviser noted in a tart reference to Specter, "Arresting someone in Lebanon is not the same as arresting someone in Philadelphia." In April Specter canceled hearings on an obscure proposed Justice Department regulation that would allow "secured staff detention" of juveniles. It is a controversial proposal that critics say amounts to unconstitutional preventive detention and would affect thousands of young people. Unfortunately, it is also a surefire dud with the press. Specter canceled the session and held the Webb-Dotson hearings instead.

The emphasis of style over substance might be most disturbing to those who were prompted by the Mengele hearings to contribute to Specter's reelection campaign. Last year, in an apparent effort to court Pennsylvania's large Ukrainian community, Specter championed the case of Fyodor Federenko, a Ukrainian who was a guard at Treblinka. The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations has contended for eight years that Federenko was a Nazi war criminal. In 1983 the U.S. Immigration Court, relying on eyewitness testimony of Holocaust survivors, found that Federenko had "assisted in the thousands of murders" at Treblinka, and ordered him deported. Specter helped Federenko fight the order. For four months in late 1984 Specter's administrative assistant Paul Michel and another Specter aide called the special investigations office at least five times protesting Federenko's deportation. In December the calls on behalf of the former Nazi suddenly stopped. Why? An angry Justice Department official had called Specter's office and threatened to inform the press.

MURRAY WAAS

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Is the U.S. being too solicitous?

NATO'S IDENTITY CRISIS

NATO, AS USUAL, faces problems. Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou of Greece recently announced that he will make good on his commitment to remove American bases from Greece. In coming months Spain will vote on whether to join NATO. There has been some worried speculation that within the next two or three years parties opposed to current NATO strategies will assume power in West Germany and Britain. Above all, a growing number of U.S. legislators seem to be losing patience with the state of the alliance.

This predicament is nothing new. Alliances are characteristically strife-torn and unstable. (Someone once said that Napoleon was not, after all, a great general because he always confronted notoriously weak and unreliable alliances rather than strong and united enemies.) NATO, moreover, has been in a state of disarray from the beginning. In 1949, when NATO was first conceived, there were mighty outcries from both the right and the left, in the United States as well as in Europe. Henry Wallace called it an instrument of aggression in violation of the U.N. Charter. Senator Robert Taft, who was advocating an isolationism of the right, was equally opposed. The subsequent history of the alliance will be written one day in terms of a permanent crisis, from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's "agonizing reappraisal" in 1954 to the cancellation of Skybolt in 1962 (a blow to Britain, which had insisted it was an essential part of its nuclear defense strategy), from the gradual withdrawal of France beginning in 1962 to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's Brussels speech a few years ago, in which he told Europeans that they could not automatically count on America in a time of crisis unless they worked to restore some balance to NATO.

In a closely reasoned article some seven years ago, Earl Ravenal wrote that NATO had in fact died, and no one had even noticed. He rightly pointed out that the alliance had been created in another time and designed for another state of affairs. How could such a structure survive in a

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"radically different geopolitical era"? Ravenal's clothes were later stolen, figuratively speaking, by Irving Kristol and others, much to Ravenal's dismay. Other schools of thought proposed as an alternative that American foreign policy be reoriented toward the Pacific basin.

Ravenal's obituary notwithstanding, NATO has shown an astonishing resilience. One does not have to look far for the reasons. The world situation in 1985 does not, of course, resemble that of 1950, but the threat that made these nations join forces has not disappeared. I am not certain what a "geopolitical era" is, but I was taught that anything connected with "geo" seldom if ever changes. As for the Pacific basin proposal, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, and even Singapore and Taiwan, are not promising candidates for establishing global defense alliances.

And so after all these years of doubts and setbacks, some political scientists investigating the state of the American alliance system have concluded that we never had it so good. In the lead article of *International Security*'s spring issue, Stephen Walt proclaims that the world's democracies are "wealthy, technologically advanced and militarily capable. . . . The American alliance system is both impressive in its capabilities and unusually cohesive. . . ." This assertion becomes somewhat suspect if one looks more closely at the facts and figures on which it is based. Not all will share Walt's enthusiasm about the military capabilities (or agree about the willingness to shed blood for the alliance) of Mexico and Brazil, of Greece and Saudi Arabia, of Pakistan and New Zealand—to single out but a few of Mr. Walt's stalwart allies.

Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in what he is saying. The true state of the alliance is somewhere between the theory of premature demise and the wilder flights of optimism. The last few years have been relatively calm. The dire predictions about the consequences of stationing the Pershing II have been proved wrong; even the Soviets have more or less dropped the subject. But how long will the calm last? It is always misleading to generalize about Europe, because there is not one Europe. And this, of course, is very much part of the problem.

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a consensus on defense; now if there is a consensus, it is mainly negative. Reduced to the lowest common denominator, the dilemma can be defined as follows: the European members of NATO, rightly or wrongly, are skeptical about Star Wars because they believe it would weaken deterrence. But they do not like deterrence either. They want a higher nuclear threshold—a wholly laudable desire—but they claim that for political, social, and economic reasons they are unable to strengthen their conventional defense in accordance with past NATO resolutions. They complain about American predominance, but they are unable to bring about the Europeanization of Europe's defense. They express fear of strategies that would result in a military "decoupling" (that is, contrary to the original NATO agreement, an attack on one country wouldn't necessarily mean an attack on the others), but they do not hesitate to pursue political decoupling in their dealings with the Soviet bloc and the Third World. They support détente, but are willing to accept the Kremlin rules, under which détente is limited to Europe.

The American record with its partners has been far from unblemished. But would the situation be radically different even if American policymakers had acted with the wisdom of sages and the patience of angels? Seen in retrospect, America's main sin has not been neglect and lack of consultation, but an excess of zeal. The handling of Star Wars is the most recent example: whatever the merits of the initiative, was it really necessary to beg European governments to collaborate, to bring pressure on them, even to create the impression of an ultimatum? There is now a sweeping conviction that U.S. investment in Western Europe—financial as well as political and strategic—is so extensive that America cannot afford to reduce its commitment. What's more, there is a widespread belief that the conflict is essentially between the two superpowers and thus only of limited concern to Western Europe.

The threat posed by the Soviets is not of a blitzkrieg, but of the gradual establishment of Russian hegemony in Europe. This danger has become difficult to understand in Europe, precisely because of too much American solicitude. In fact, Europe needs the alliance as much (or more) than America because of its unfortunate proximity to the one superpower that also happens to have the greater appetite. To understand this, neither great political wisdom is needed nor ideological sympathy with the White House. But American overprotectiveness has helped to suppress this simple truth, and instead a "false consciousness" has developed. Hence the erosion of the consensus.

COULD IT be restored? Certainly not by an American policy more European than that of most European governments. A new consensus might emerge on the basis of a hard look at the realities of the world situation. But this will come about only as the result of European self-education, in which America cannot and should not play a prominent role. Why should it implore millions of Spaniards to vote for NATO in the forthcoming elections? Why should it endlessly upbraid the Danes and others for failing to meet their defense commitments? All this is clearly the task of the major European governments. American initiatives in this direction are neither dignified nor effective.

It is not entirely clear whether the loss of Greece would be a disaster or a blessing for NATO. The difficulties go deeper than the fact that the Greek military effort is wholly directed against another NATO member. Greece's links with Europe are tenuous; there is more affinity between Papandreou and Colonel Qaddafi than between him and most European leaders, and there seems to be a genuine longing in the country for nonalignment. Its record in the European Economic Community has persuaded most members that it was a mistake to let Greece join. The EEC decision cannot now be reversed. But the NATO situation

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is different. In view of Greece's economic plight, it is quite likely that Papandreou, desperately seeking loans and other aid, will be ready for some "concessions," which might include subletting naval bases to the alliance. But the price should be reasonable, and it should be clear to Papandreou that the other Western nations do not want him to act against his conscience.

Spain is also torn in two directions—forward to Europe and freedom, and backward to northern Africa. Thirty years of Francoism cannot be quickly lived down. Spain's political self-education is by necessity a long, drawn-out process; as with Greece, its self-interest may in the end propel it toward cooperation with Europe. One encouraging sign is that even the socialist ministers who in the past opposed this move are now willing to help the prime minister fight for it. Still, many Spaniards have yet to resolve the question of their country's place in the world. Until then, outside pressure will not be appreciated.

THEN THERE REMAINS the problem of the leaders and movements in the major European countries who in recent years have increasingly stressed their national interests—and the specific interests of Europe—in contradistinction to those of America. French neo-Gaullists, German and British socialists, Dutch churchmen, British and Danish liberals (and not a few conservatives), and others have expressed unhappiness with American leadership—whatever the name and the style of the president, and regardless of his party affiliation.

During the last year there have been some new initiatives toward the Europeanization of the defense of Europe within the framework of the West European Union and the Independent European Program Group. WEU was founded in the early 1950s, and was revived in 1984 after being dormant for many years. Among its handful of members are France, Great Britain, West Germany, and Italy; but it does not include Denmark and Norway, Greece and Turkey. Various common projects have been discussed such as European fighter aircraft and a European tank. There is, of course, no certainty that WEU will succeed where NATO has so far failed; progress has been very slow. According to the recent annual *Strategic Survey*, published by London's International Institute for Strategic Studies: "It must be said, however, that the impulses toward cooperation are a good deal clearer than the precise nature of such cooperation. Most West European governments are adopting a cautious . . . attitude. . . . It is likely to be a year or two before it is clear whether or not this particular train is going anywhere."

Some European leaders have expressed fears that these initiatives may offend Washington, but this should be the least of their worries. They may be well advised to ignore the kind of letter that the State Department has been sending, warning them against uncoordinated defense activities. Americans will prefer almost any sign of life, almost any initiative emanating from Europe, even if they may not agree with all the details.

But what if forces should come to power in one or more European countries whose views about Western defense are even more divergent from America's? A victory of the German Social Democrats and a weakening of the position of the British Conservatives cannot be ruled out. Yet both in Britain and in West Germany during the last year there has been a marked movement from the extreme anti-American left toward the center—partly, no doubt, in recognition that an extreme political platform is an invitation for defeat. The Greens, whose influence was always overrated by the American media, are on the decline; and the unfriendly statements of Neil Kinnock or the German young turks such as Oskar Lafontaine should not be taken too seriously: the dismantling of the alliance is not part of their program. The Socialist leaders have spent many days in Soviet bloc capitals in the hope of bringing back some positive messages. They have returned with empty hands. Even European Communists overwhelmingly favor the preservation of the status quo as far as Western defense is concerned. For obvious reasons they do not feel free to say so openly.

The great majority of European neutralists simply lack the courage of their convictions. If America were to challenge them tomorrow, there would be no rush to take the plunge. A neutral Europe, they would say, yes, of course. . . . But the time is not ripe yet. Much more preparatory work is needed to create the preconditions. . . . It might be a spectacle worth watching.

No alliance lasts forever. But as for the coming years, it can be said with considerable assurance that if the Western alliance disintegrates, it will not be on the initiative of the Europeans but because of a loss of patience among a growing number of Americans.

European attitudes toward defense have been contradictory for a long time: they have been critical of American insensitivity and overreliance on nuclear weapons. But at the same time there has been little willingness to do something about this. They want a Europe not subjected to outside command, but they do not want too many sacrifices toward this end. Perhaps the threat does not exist or is not as formidable as the "cold warriors" maintain. A comforting thought this, and it would solve most problems. But the facts so far do not bear it out, and even the neutralists in their innermost hearts know it.

Thus, in the final analysis, the future of the alliance does not mainly depend upon the resolution of Papandreou's financial difficulties, the outcome of a Spanish plebiscite, or a vote in the Danish parliament. It depends upon the course the United States chooses to take. Patience has never been an outstanding American virtue, which is something Europeans should keep in mind as they struggle to resolve their ambivalence about their own defense needs.

WALTER LAQUEUR

Walter Laqueur's most recent book is *Germany Today* (Little, Brown).

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A yuppie lawyer's dirty little secret.

CONFESSIONS OF A 'PRACTICING' CATHOLIC

BY THOMAS GEOGHEGAN

I STILL CRINGE when they ask, in that condescending tone: "Oh, are you a practicing Catholic?" Then, and inescapably: "Do you go to church on Sunday?" Oh. *Practicing* Catholic, in my circle, does not have a very grown-up sound. Sometimes, knowing I went to a Catholic high school, a friend asks: "When did you stop practicing?" It is awkward breaking the news.

A man who is not Catholic once said to me: "What interests me about Catholics is that they're swimming against every tide." It is almost eccentric to have a religion at all, much less one so demanding. Most of my friends are either agnostic or not even that sure. I know how unbelievers must have felt in the age of faith.

Like some other Catholics, I am usually aghast if the subject comes up. We have the same agnostic prudishness that others have about discussing it. Ill at ease with the language of God, we can manage only a few spastic, half-completed sentences before we leave off, gasping for breath. I begin seeing my faith as a secret, even a betrayal of something.

Some years ago I let it slip, innocently, to a woman I was dating, that I was one of *them*. After that, in her best grad-school manner, she kept pestering me about rosaries, novenas, and the like. On Friday night at a bar, my mouth full of onion rings, the waitress pouring my Heineken, she suddenly asked, in a hushed voice, "What is . . . God?" I drew on my entire Catholic education, leaned across my beer, and said: "Give me a break."

Of course, it has never been the style of the American Catholic to buttonhole strangers. Our strategy is James Joyce's: cunning, silence, and exile. But sometimes an agnostic will break the code and bring up "the" subject. Like a drunk, he stumbles toward you with his theological haymaker. Do you want to short-circuit a heavy discussion? Then stay away from existential and scientific arguments, because they only rile people. With the existentialist argument, you look like a show-off. Hans Kung, the German theologian, gave the argument its classic statement in his 1978 opus, *Does God Exist?*, boiling it down to 900 pages. Kung says that since you cannot prove or disprove the existence of God, you should assume God exists. Otherwise, the only honorable alternative is nihilistic despair. You should shoot yourself, like the hero of a Dostoevsky novel, or become syphilitically insane, like Nietzsche in real life. When you point this out, your agnostic friends get testy. They refuse to do the honorable thing.

The scientific argument, though less ad hominem, is even more offensive to them. They are supposed to be on the side of science, not you. That is the whole point of being agnostic. Tell them recent discoveries about the origin of the universe have shaken the atheist position. Tell them Fred Hoyle, the atheist-astronomer, is said to be reconsidering. The point is not to win the argument, but to show that you too can put on a scientific smock. For example, if they quote Freud, and attribute all religious belief to infantilism, then hit back. Attribute all disbelief to infantile rage. Like most of Freud's statements, you can neither prove nor disprove it, but who cares? The point is to neutralize the other side. After all, you did not raise the subject.

As a modern Catholic, you do not want to cause scandal. A few years ago, when I was in Ireland, I heard my contemporaries discuss what the priest had said at last Sunday's Mass. With my ACLU decorum, I felt awkward, as if we were violating the separation of church and state. Instinctively, I wanted to caution an Irish friend who started such talk: "Uh, Pat, not here. . . ." In fact, Ireland was simply the unembarrassed Catholic world I had been raised to live in as a child.

In a certain respect, every Catholic is an "ex-Catholic," once he leaves his lurid Catholic childhood. But at my age, in his mid-30s, he is ex-Catholic in a second respect: the 1950s Church is no longer around. Because our lives straddle both sides of Vatican II, we pick at something here, something there, for an adult religious identity that does not entirely throw out the poetry of childhood. Our personal problem is the Church's: how to keep the ornamentation while preserving what one priest calls Vatican II's "glorious work of destruction."

We don't want our Church to lose what Father Robert Imbelli, a Catholic theologian, has called the "sacramental consciousness." By sacramental, he means a vision of the world "charged with the grandeur of God," in the words of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. You get the sense of what this means in a book like *Ulysses*. Joyce's Catholics have a fine, sacramental notion of ordinary life. All through the day, like bag ladies, the characters are

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muttering the little bits of prayer, dogma, and religious trivia that keep popping into their heads. We do the same nutty interior monologues today. When I first read Joyce in high school, I realized, in shock, "This is how I talk to myself." Yes, *Ulysses* is a put-down of Catholic culture. But on the other hand, the Catholics get to have epiphanies.

The Catholics like me who grew up on both sides of Vatican II have our own dualist way of seeing the Catholic universe: Latin/English, pope/parish council, Spellman/Bernadin, right-to-life/liberation theology. Especially now, under John Paul, the Church is still suspended, still Janus-faced, half-1950s, half-1960s, and for my generation, this dual Church is the traditional one, one that began fracturing between grade school and high school.

THE LAST THING any of us needs, I know, is another Catholic memoir, and I will at least spare us the puberty jokes. The very name of my grade school, Cardinal Pacelli, which sounds today like a nouvelle pasta, was sacred to the 1950s Church. It was the name of Eugenio Pacelli, a former cardinal, who had become by then Pope Pius XII. In 1936, about 20 years before, Pacelli had blessed the school cornerstone while passing through Cincinnati on his way to Detroit to muzzle Father Coughlin, the famous radio priest. Back before Polish popes, it was considered a near-miracle that Pius XII (even as a cardinal) had *been* to our school.

I was inconsolable at 11, when Pius died, although I never really liked him. He looked like Woodrow Wilson, except colder and tighter-lipped. Strangely, after his death our school made a bas-relief of him, in which he is entwined like Bacchus in grapes and vines. "Well," a kid in my class said, "wine is the official drink of the Catholic Church."

I felt disloyal liking the new pope, John XXIII, much better. For kids my age, he was the surrogate grandfather-figure. If he called the Council, it was all right by us. It could not really be a break with the past, because he was the past. He was *the* pope, the way FDR was *the* president to my father's generation. The eerie thing was that John was pope only five years.

Public school kids went home at 3 p.m., but in Catholic schools we worked overtime and on weekends to celebrate an almost endless series of feasts for the Blessed Virgin. Our teachers, the Sisters of Notre Dame, usually ran convent schools, the sort that keep kicking out Grace Kelly's daughters. Pacelli was a bad assignment. They looked on us as mission work. We heard about the Blessed Virgin, Fatima, Bernadette, St. Pius X, who lowered the age for First Communion, and Blessed Mother Julie, founder of the order, called only "blessed," to the disgust of the nuns, because Rome had not yet canonized her as "saint."

While the sisters watched, we used to go to the blackboard and draw chalk pictures of Baptism, Confession, Holy Communion, and Extreme Unction and the gushing rivers of grace they splashed down on us. I went to First Communion, dressed like the groom at a midget wedding, then to hundreds of Communions, benedictions, stations of the cross, and rosaries. I lived and breathed incense. My sacramental consciousness was at flood tide.

Twice a year we went to the school hall to see either *Going My Way* or *The Bells of St. Mary's*. We staged plays about bishops, nuns, and Blessed Mother Julie, who was shot, not surprisingly, in the French Revolution. Urged by my grandmother, I read one saint a day from *The Lives of the Saints*. Meanwhile, I also watched *Beaver*, *Lucy* and *The Untouchables* (yes, in our house, we could watch it). I read Superman comics. Somehow, it all made sense. I only had one question. What did the letter of Fatima say? It was supposed to be opened in 1960, but I never heard. According to my father, it said: "Hire Ara Parseghian." But maybe you do not follow Notre Dame football.

In the 1950s my grandfather used to predict that one day the nuns would walk out and the Church would collapse. Yet back then, even he could not have guessed the force of their uncloistered rage now. Priests talk about the tension of simply being in the same room with them. Many nuns loathe the pope. When John Paul came to Chicago, one woman told me, the nuns at her college said it was not even worth a subway fare to see him.

It is not a simple matter of the Church being sexist, although the sexism is both fierce and petty. For example, even Cardinal Bernadin, a liberal, has just reaffirmed the ban on "girl altar boys." Rather, the Church gave women a false sense of importance, then used them badly and betrayed them. Some Catholic feminists like Rosemary Reuther no longer seek woman priests but woman deities. If that sounds novel, recall that Catholics used to have such a deity in Mary. Then the male reformers of Vatican II started her demotion. "Reform" meant exorcising all the rosary-clutching female witchcraft out of the Church but keeping all the shamanistic male rituals.

The age of Mary was over: we men got to leave the Middle Ages, but the women had to stay, and the gross unfairness caused an explosion. Too late, John Paul I, the 30-day pope, broached the idea of saying "God the Mother" instead of "God the Father." His successor just pretends that the age of Mary is still going on, as if both sexes were back in the medieval Church. Do not blame the Jesus of the Gospels, His treatment of women was more of a miracle than the loaves and fishes. Mary, Martha, Magdalen, and others were friends, the ones who did not walk out.

NOW THE NUNS are walking out. In my eight years at Pacelli, all but one of my teachers were nuns. My brother, 14 years younger, had hardly a one. I feel sorry for the nuns my age. As vocations decline, some of them are working two jobs to keep bread on the table for all the older nuns, dazed that they outlived the age of Mary.

By the time Vatican II struck, and English crept into the Mass, I was in a Jesuit high school, leaving this Church of

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the 1950s for the Church of the 1960s. The Jesuits, or "Jebbies," as my father's generation still calls them, continued to see themselves as the intellectual shock troops of the Church. For hundreds of years, they had battled Voltaire-Sartre on the left, and Pascal-Maritain on the right. "Jesuitical" had become a threatening byword. Their historic mission was to educate a Catholic lay elite, at the coincidental moment when Vatican II was about to give the laity a real voice.

AT THAT TIME, we Jesuit boys knew only that St. Xavier was in the fast lane, compared with other Catholic schools. "St. X" was really a private school that drew the brightest boys from all over the city. A girl at St. Ursula told me then: "To go out with a guy from X . . . it's like going out with the son of an ambassador or something." This was going too far (all right, *way* too far), but it suggests our sense of being chosen.

Some of our best teachers were the young Jesuit scholastics. They were seminarians but also graduate students, destined for Jesuit-college faculties. Some are still in the order as rectors and provincials. Others are rich and married. They egged us on like older brothers. They were the nascent Catholic left, catching on very fast to the civil rights movement and what we then quaintly called "the war on poverty." In two years we went from the Baltimore catechism to Eric Fromm. We went from Blessed Mother Julie to Saul Alinsky.

Even in Latin, we threw out Virgil and turned on to the much randier love poetry of Catullus. And Joyce would have been horrified that *Portrait of the Artist* was required reading. His old enemy, the Jesuits, had had the last laugh, as if to say they could take even a renegade Jesuit boy like Joyce in stride. How could I revolt like Stephen Dedalus if I had to read him for class?

It seems obvious now. Our Catholic culture, with its un-American taint, let us flirt with early New Left and middle-of-the-road Freud. We were Americans, but the Church was universal. Anything new or foreign-sounding might fit. The great chain of being had room for folk Masses and the counterculture.

Of course, this was high school, not the Sorbonne. We hung out at the gym, skirted the edge of sock-hops, locked ourselves in our rooms. Just good American kids, born too soon for indoor malls. The Catholic-left stuff dawned on us later, in college, when we realized we were as precocious as anyone from a Groton or Exeter.

The Jesuit old guard fought the program. They ripped us away from Erich Fromm, and forced us to watch, on closed-circuit TV, the "sex-and-marriage" course, taught by a bald, brooding priest. He used to rhapsodize, with an eerie glint, about the "voyage of discovery" we would take on our wedding nights. It was enough to make you seasick, even, I think, the few who were already experienced sailors.

At every point in my Catholic education, the public schools were a mystery. Sister Robert Marie, now Sister Mary Roberts, used to ask her Pacelli kids, "What do the teachers say about right and wrong? How can they tell children to do this and not do that?" Pity our Catholic naïveté. Inner-city public schools, like Chicago's, I now understand. They are in a death struggle with gang culture, and any teacher, simply out of self-preservation, has to preach right and wrong. But "normal" public schools, in placid suburbia, I can never quite picture. If biblical religion is out, what do they teach? "Civic republican virtue"? What, in the Reagan era, is that? You wonder why they want a "moment of silence" in public schools. The silence must be awful enough as it is.

But many ex-Catholics spend their lives raging at parochial schools. They have good reason. Instead of helping you to get ahead, a Catholic education is almost an attempt to derail you. It programs you in a language that is skewed to a morality of sacrificial love, not tough-minded self-interest. In *Habits of the Heart* (University of California Press), a recent study of American individualism, Robert Bellah and his coauthors say that most middle-class Americans do not even have "a moral language that transcends radical individualism." Every American Catholic, who starts life with such a language, gets a little taste of cultural imperialism. Your moral language is ripped away from you. To be American, you had better learn to say, and believe, that your only purpose on earth is to make yourself "happy." (Now come on, what else is there?) Many Protestants and Jews are victims too, but at least they cannot blame an alien school system.

Indeed, the ex-Catholics in this country are probably the fiercest anti-Catholic bigots. There is even a minor school of writers, like Christopher Durang, whose courageous life-goal is to burn nuns in effigy. Those nuns: enemy of our sophisticated, adult way of life.

THE CATHOLIC LAITY used to have it down: come five minutes late to Mass, sit in the back pew, bring home coffee cake. Back in the days of the passive laity, there was no such thing as a parish council. The highest lay office to which you could aspire was usher: not like a Baptist or Methodist usher, who greets each member of the congregation, but a Catholic usher, who winks at his pals, whispers a joke, and lets people find their own seats. His job was to wait until the middle of the sermon, then suddenly begin opening windows to keep people from fainting.

My brother says our old parish has changed: "It's all yupped up." The age of the usher makes way for the age of the deacon. The "deacons," in the broad sense, are the young post-Council Catholics you see up on the altar next to the priest: the "cantors," the "commentators," the "lectors," and the "eucharistic ministers." They are the civil servants of the new Mass. With nothing to do, the altar boys just mope around, and dress decadently in red cassocks. The old guys, the ushers, just stare frostily at the deacons across a generation gap.

With fewer priests every year, the deacons keep getting a bigger share of the priestly function, even in this time of conservative restoration. Although the pastor still runs

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the parish, he is more like a constitutional monarch. The real radicals tend to be on the liturgy committee. In monasteries the old monks used to say that two subjects should be avoided: politics and the liturgy. I know what they mean. In this age of the new Mass, the liturgy committee can keep everyone unsettled by slight tinkering every week. Most Catholics hate to sing. We were used to castrated papal choirs, Gregorian chant, *Pange lingua*. We do not much like the current songs—weepy Victorian hymns, generic folk music—and we hate learning new ones. There are millions of Masses where only five people are even trying to sing, the rest of us in mute animal protest refusing to move our lips.

To stir up things even more, some parishes have a "peace-and-social-justice" committee. "I quit," a friend of mine said. "It kept breaking out into fights."

It is slothful and un-Catholic of me, but I am not formally in any parish of Chicago at present. For a while, I was sampling different North Side parishes, as if they were so many ethnic restaurants. I have narrowed the choice to St. Clement or St. Alphonsus.

St. Clement, the "yuppie parish," in Lincoln Park, is where I should feel most at home. The priests give glittering, graduate-level sermons. They seem to improvise them, as if they came from the heart, but in complete sentences. Yuppie or not, the parish has a fierce spirit. But among this embattled young Catholic elite, I feel self-conscious: in liking the sermons too much, in wondering why the others are here, in trying not to be self-conscious.

So I often vacation for a few Sundays at St. Alphonsus, an old German Redemptorist parish. St. Alphonsus was, and still is, a big cavernous immigrants' church. You simply sit there, in the half-dark, with little old ladies and the young Third-World Mexicans, Filipinos, Vietnamese. The people do not pray in the same language, or same two languages. A woman with a rosary shuffles on her knees up the main aisle, another chants to the Infant of Prague, and I think, "Yikes, get me back to St. Clement."

I wonder which church, St. Clement or St. Alphonsus, is the Church of the future.

AS A PRACTICING Catholic, you find yourself in half-solidarity with the Third World. Sunday after Sunday, you get exposed to it through the missionaries, the Catholic press, and the Hispanic immigrants who have taken over the old Bing Crosby parishes. Last Pentecost Sunday at St. Clement, a nun gave a sermon that denounced Reagan's policies in Central America. She praised Catholics who had signed pledges of resistance if the U.S. attempted any military intervention. She went on to praise Catholics who set up homeless shelters and sanctuary movements. Only one man, who looked like a golfer, walked out of the sermon. The rest of us are either receptive to the Catholic left or just docile in the presence of nuns.

A few weeks earlier I attended, accidentally, a Mass by Cardinal Bernadin for "young Chicago Catholics." Bernadin told us to fight the dark chaos of modern life. As an example, he held up a young Catholic lawyer who would give his time *pro bono* for Central American refugees. No one was shocked. I looked around at this placid flock of sleek young professionals. After Mass there was a "jazz brunch" for the cardinal. Was anyone really going to flirt with danger for this new Catholic-left faith?

Tip O'Neill is my favorite example of an old-school Catholic crossing wires with the Third World Church. More than other, younger Democratic leaders, O'Neill has opposed Reagan's policies in Central America. He has relied, however, not on the Harvard experts of his Cambridge district but on the Maryknoll nuns. Since his aunt was a Maryknoll nun, Tip has a sentimental attachment to the order, many of whose members are in the avant-garde of the Catholic left.

In these little ways, you feel the Third World Church infiltrating your own. In the American Church, unlike the American press, the news flows north-south as well as east-west. Of the world's 800 million Catholics, some 328 million are in Latin America. Half of John Paul's trips abroad have been to the Third World. As the pope has said, the Vatican could just as easily be in Manila as in Rome.

FOR MOST PEOPLE, the sign of the Third World Church is liberation theology. The Vatican so far has not condemned liberation theology root and branch, though its attitude is unfriendly. The rub is that liberation theology asks the Church to do more than fight for the poor. It asks the Church to *become* poor. The Church must give up its privileged role in society and every form of privilege in its own structure.

The Vatican seems caught between a crusade against communism and one against capitalism. If you read John Paul's encyclical "On Human Labor," he sounds somewhere to the left of the British Labor Party. He has stressed the Church's commitment to a "preferential option for the poor." As long as he does so, the left can hope that this pope or another is on a collision course with the West.

Liberation theology has echoes of the late Middle Ages, when millenarian sects preached a collective, terrestrial salvation, in a war for the end of the world. Liberation theology calls for an old-fashioned crusade of the poor, with Latin America the new Jerusalem.

It is often said that the Church now turns to political and social affairs because we do not believe so much in the old religious apocalypse. In the case of liberation theology, that is not true. It needs religious apocalypse to back up its desperate political commitment, as if the Scriptures left us no choice. The favorite text is Matthew 25. That chapter, which describes the Last Judgment, is great political theater. The Son of Man allows in the kingdom only those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, and visited prisoners. To the Catholic left, Matthew 25 takes in Reagan, Pinochet, and the IMF. Luke's Gospel has even more attacks on the rich, and the Epistle of St. James is an incendiary tract. All of

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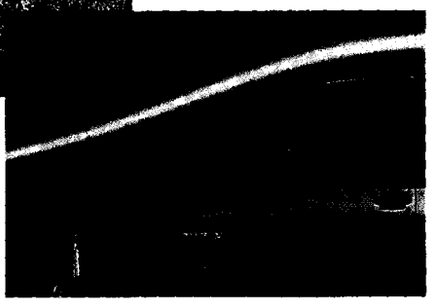

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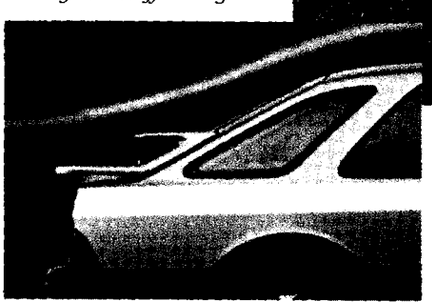

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Christianity comes down to a single question: Which side are you on?

IN THE U. S., at a comfortable distance from Third World manifestos, we sit and debate our pastoral letters. According to a poll reported in *The New York Times*, the bishops' letter on nuclear disarmament had an astounding impact on Catholics. The number of Catholics who thought that too much was being spent on weapons went from 32 percent in 1983 to 54 percent in 1984. The pastoral letter on the economy may not have the same effect. The bishops will now postpone the final draft until 1986.

Compared with liberation theology, the letter on the economy is extremely tame. But behind it is the same Matthew 25 eschatology. The letter says, in italics: *"Our fundamental norm in judging economic policies has been this: What will this approach or policy do to the poor and deprived members of the human community?"* Fortunately, the first draft of the letter brought screams of outrage from William Simon, William Buckley, and others. If it had not, we would hardly have known what was in it. With 333 paragraphs, and several hundred footnotes, this "letter" makes Thomas Aquinas seem like Mickey Spillane. And I have yet to hear a single sermon about it.

The pastoral letters symbolize the Church's shift to the left. In the United States, after Vatican II, "laicization" created a new body of activist laity. By itself, that did not mean the Church would move left. In the suburbs, it is right-to-lifers, not proto-Sandinistas, who run the parish councils. But there is some mysterious dynamic that pushes the deacons to the left.

In some cases, it is easy to explain. All my life, I have known saints who started out, accidentally, as rock-ribbed Republicans. They begin to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and so forth. For a while, they keep voting for Reagan. But Matthew 25 is a slippery slope. One day they crack, and you see them being arrested for criminal trespass at some military base.

That does not account for everyone else. Of course, most Catholics are traditionally Democrats. Yet the new Catholics are not traditional Democrats. We are college-educated activists, not brute-vote ethnics. Many of us picked up our Catholic-left style in the same year, 1968, some from Eugene McCarthy, some from Robert Kennedy. McCarthy's campaign started just after the release of *A Man for All Seasons*, with Paul Scofield as Thomas More. Like More, McCarthy seemed to be one of those rare lay Catholics who took responsibility for saving his own soul. Not only that, he also wrote books—and he came from the Catholic schools! He was a role model that some of us needed, to show we could make our own moral judgments without the help of priests and nuns. The Mario Cuomo of the abortion debate is a McCarthy Catholic.

But I was for Kennedy, America's first Third World Catholic. There was nothing especially Catholic about him except the size of his family. He did not seem to worry much about saving his own soul. But through him, we thought we saw the Kingdom of God in the barrios and ghettos. Kennedy had Matthew 25 down cold. He told us to identify with the poor, and because he was macho, he could give sacrificial love a certain existential cool. The Mario Cuomo of the keynote speech is a Kennedy Catholic.

By the way, Reagan is the first non-Catholic politician with the old-time Catholic-pol style. He mythologizes. But he has put the style in service of an anti-Catholic, laissez-faire philosophy. It is too much for the Catholic left, which has a special grudge against him for betrayal of a Catholic aesthetic. Still, without Reagan, we might not have the pastoral letters, or be in this golden age of the Catholic left.

The Catholic left has come a long way, baby, from Cardinal Spellman. The pastoral letters have made it seem like "our" Church. Even the most dissident, the most "Protestant" of us, cannot help our growing sense: a good Catholic cannot be a good Reaganite. Yet you cannot actually *say* that, even if it is true, to Catholics on your right. By trying, you only corrupt yourself or corrupt them, in a very un-Catholic way. Hundreds of Catholic Churches, like the angels, can dance on the head of a pin: the Dutch-Catholic Church, the Roman-Curia Church, the right-to-life Church, the Third World Church, the cold-war Polish Church, the Pacem-in-Terris Church, the Whiskey-Priest Church. Many who drop out think there must be a "real" one, pulling the strings of the others, known or knowable only to conspiracy theorists and Freemasons.

OF COURSE, it is not our Church, nor anyone else's, even John Paul's. The Church in this liberal time is much less reformable. It is less like the Counter-Reformation monarchy that died with Pius XII and more like the old Catholic Church of the Middle Ages: not a church but a Christendom. If you look at liturgies, my father says, "The Episcopalians are more Catholic than we are." But, Dad, we still have guilt and the sacraments. The truth is, we are more Catholic than ever. My friends say, "How can you stand to be in the same Church with Cardinal O'Connor?" I say, trust tradition. Hacks are always in, holy men are always out. Even if the Catholic left had its way about everything, the Church would still be a scandal. If it were not messy and impure, it would not be Catholic, and I would not want to be part of it.

So let the right figure it out for itself. I would rather not know (too much) if my faith justifies my politics. Let them work on each other, without my being too aware of it. As Jesus said, with Zen-like deftness, "Render unto Caesar," and so forth. There are thousands of ways, from revolution to pacifism, to carry out the Gospel. For the one sure way to play it safe, be a softhearted, out-of-power, Norman Thomas socialist. That is how most people write off the Son of Man. If you want something more, you are on your own. The contradiction is the fun of it—just look at the Italian Renaissance.

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If the Catholic left has come of age, why do I feel out of step with America? On economic issues, you are headed left, just as everyone else seems headed right. On moral issues, "enlightened" Catholic or not, you are still somewhere in the land of PG-13. On abortion, the Catholic left is all over the place. It seems best to attack Cardinal O'Connor, then sink into a mumble.

There is a connection, perhaps, between the rise of the Catholic left and the increased isolation of being Catholic at all. For the urban, college-educated professionals in my culture, it is almost a political act just to go into a church. By definition, you must be somewhat estranged. In 1945 Theodor Adorno wrote that an ascetic or religious life is the kind of bulwark against modern culture that a bohemian or hedonistic life had been against the culture of 60 years before.

There are some signs of a religious revival among the "new Catholics," such as those who have become lectors, commentators, and deacons. Catholics are now reading Scripture. In my old parish, a few years ago, a lector asked me to join a group that even *discussed* Scripture. It seemed like such a Protestant thing to do. I admired their courage. I admired *my* courage, getting involved with people who might turn out to be religious fanatics, preaching in tongues or handling snakes. In fact, we all were normal, inhibited, catacomb Catholics: people in sales, advertising, public relations, people you might dismiss as conventional yuppies, except for this secret, unfashionable waste of time in prayer.

Since Vatican II, the lectoring business has created a whole class of Scripture-readers. In the teaching orders, like the Jesuits, the most ambitious priests have gone into biblical studies. Some of the new scholarship is radical or even, as one critic said, "piously agnostic." Liberal theologians, like the Dutch priest Edward Schillebeeckx, say that Jesus did not intend to found a church, did not really perform miracles, did not understand himself to be divine. The real agnostics dare them to go the rest of the way and throw out the Resurrection, too.

But the Catholic approach to the Bible is hardly fundamentalist. Like James Joyce's characters, we read it for epiphanies. We fasten on what is touching and strange. Catholics have finally realized, one priest said, that the Bible is also a sacrament, the first that is truly do-it-yourself, and not the private property of the Church.

WE SPEAK OF a religious revival, and all around us are ex-priests. Embarrassed, we see our former teachers at lunch counters or street corners, and look away. Like the undead, they seem to point at us in accusation. Our culture made their religious life impossible. The times seem out of joint with a celibate priesthood. Recently, in Wisconsin, I walked through a seminary that was almost a ghost town. Some ex-priests disappear, and some write novels. Some are in Hollywood. By the streams of Babylon, we sat down and wept. The culture is simply too heavy and gross for that old Catholic Church.

Hypocritically, as priests fall to the side, we make a cult of religiosity. Mother Theresa is the most shameful example. Thomas Merton, who died in 1968, is now a cottage industry, with nearly all his books in print. There is even a minor fad of people vacationing at Trappist monasteries. The priests just wince. "Don't go," one warned me. "The beds are like rocks."

Today Catholics want religiosity even in their bishops. "The people don't want proud bishops," a priest said, "they want humble bishops." To the outside world, the big difference between Bernadin and O'Connor is that one speaks for the Catholic left and one for the Catholic right. But a bigger difference may be their religious styles. Bernadin tries to appear as a humble bishop, O'Connor as a proud one. For example, when Bernadin first came to Chicago, he said that he had not really learned to pray until mid-career. When he was archbishop of Cincinnati, he said, some younger priests took him into their prayer group. By this story, he repents, in effect, for having been just an ecclesiastical politician. O'Connor may be no worse a man, but he does not know the new style.

RECENTLY, on business, I was at St. Thomas of Canterbury in Chicago's Uptown. St. Thomas, one of the poorest parishes, has Mass in four different languages. Even at night when I was there, it was a babbling madhouse, overrun with Lao refugees, screaming kids, and social workers. My fellow Catholics stared at my attaché case. Maybe there is a new Christendom of Third World have-nots emerging, to replace the old Christendom with its growing number of tongue-tied, attaché-case Catholics.

Still, every Easter, back in the old Christendom, I am amazed at the packed churches. I understand the sentiment that draws people to churches at Christmas, but not at Easter, when they seem nearly as packed. If Christianity ever came back, we would need hundreds of new churches to hold them. Are they just there this once for the Bach cantatas and Easter lilies?

As an altar boy, I used to serve many funeral Masses. The priest wore black vestments. Now he wears white, to symbolize the hope of resurrection. I believe in resurrection, but it is a change I wish they had not made.

One "new" theologian says that maybe the person most surprised at the Resurrection was Jesus. I think of all those dark Masses, the men and women in the closed coffins, hands folded around rosaries, in the hope of being surprised with resurrection. It is the Catholic Church of my own flesh and blood, centuries of drowned souls, on Jacob's ladder, part of our own troubled sleep, a litany of saints and shadows.

At some future Mass for the dead, we may yet know, with St. John:

> Something that has existed since the beginning
> that we have heard
> and have seen with our own eyes
> that we have watched and touched with our hands . . .

something wordless, a rumor of eternal life. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Revised Version

The exceptionally gifted David Hare has made a screen adaptation of his play *Plenty*, and quite evidently began with decisions about form. To understand those decisions, a glance first at the play. It deals with an Englishwoman named Susan Traherne: her exaltation during her underground war service as a late teenager in France, 1943-44; her

Plenty
(Twentieth-Century Fox)

anticipation of splendid change in the postwar world; her growing disappointments; her various jobs; her various grabs at personal fulfillment, including a rocky marriage; her decline into mental shakiness and a threat of utter dissolution. It ends with a retrospective glimpse of her in France, August 1944, exultant at victory. The play's power (despite some faults discussed later) lay not only in its concise dialogue and sharp characterizations but in its very shape. In a postscript to the published play Hare wrote: "I planned a play in twelve scenes, in which there would be twelve dramatic actions." Part of his plan was to breach chronological order at the start. The play begins in 1962, then goes back to 1943 so that we see the young committed Susan only after we have had a hint of her postwar fate. Another effect of Hare's plan is that the very shapes of the 12 scenes are mimetic of the dialogue, tense and astringent. The play is, so to speak, shaped the way it sounds.

I see no intrinsic reason why the play could not have been filmed pretty much in that form or cluster of forms, allowing for some cinematic easements at the joins. This was done well (to choose two examples) with Pinter's *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*. I can easily see the commercial reasons for converting the play into a more "producible" item. I don't mean explicit betrayal of ideas: I'm speaking only of form, though of course form is aesthetically connected with those ideas. The story is now lined up in strict chronology, except for the closing flashback; this takes care of any worries about confusing a film audience, but it seriously diminishes that first wartime scene. Almost everything implicit in the play is spelled out in the film. When Susan gets her first postwar job, utterly prosaic, we see the dingy office. When she's working in advertising and quits in the middle of a dog food commercial, we are given the inanities in detail as if we needed proof that Susan is superior to them. When her husband, a foreign service officer, is posted to the Middle East, we go there. (Said to be Jordan but shot in Tunisia. The producers weren't going to miss *that* visual chance, irrelevant though it is.) The argument for such adaptation of a play—not arbitrarily true—is that to confine the action to a few rooms, more or less, is uncinematic. Another argument, incontrovertibly true, is that one can't get many production values out of a film confined to a few rooms. And everyone concerned with *Plenty* wanted to transform it into a big picture for a big star.

The basic problems of Hare's extraordinary play persist, even grow, in the film. It's hard to believe that a person of Susan's mind could have been so deluded by the excitements of war as to forget history: to forget that no war has ever been followed by the complete realization of the aims for which it was fought, or nominally fought. We know that war experience often proves to be the high point of many people's lives, but that's quite a different matter. Further, *Plenty* strikes me as a political work with the political credo omitted. Hare, alone or in collaboration, has written plays with radical political views. Here he criticizes strongly a self-gratifying society and a stodgy government but does so almost peripherally. And now, the revised, bloated structure of the film only emphasizes the play's flaws. Susan seems even more ethically and intellectually slothful, a woman waiting for the good *not* to happen so that she can take refuge first in bitterness, then in recurrent "mental" episodes. She looks down disdainfully from unearned elevation. (Her war experiences were brave but scarcely unique.)

This makes the film sentimental, where the play, though flawed, was not. Hare underscores that sentimentality in two ways particularly. In the first wartime scene Susan meets a British agent who tells her that his chief gave him a pair of cuff links for good luck. This is in the play. In the film we go back with them to her room in the French village where the pair sleep together. When he has to rush off suddenly on a mission, he leaves the cuff links as a memento. From then on, she keeps the cuff links in her pocketbook, and they become a visual leitmotiv as she recurrently looks at them through the years. In the penultimate scene in 1962, she and that agent are reunited in a shabby room in an English seaside hotel. When she zonks out on marijuana, he goes, but not before he sees the cuff links in her open bag. (All that's miss-

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Dim Sum. Irresistible Chinese-Americans of San Francisco. Direction overly arty, story quite common, but the people are very taking. (8/26/85)

The Home and the World. Satyajit Ray's film of Tagore's novel, about change in East Bengal 1907. Generally quiet but lives in the memory. (7/8/85)

Wetherby. David Hare writes and directs a moral-spiritual drama, comparable with minor Bergman. Vanessa Redgrave, incomparable, stars. Yorkshire, very much today. (8/12&19/85)

SK

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ing is a "links" theme in the score.)

And there's a small but significant change in the final scene, the flashback to the end of the war that is in both play and film. In the film it's on a lovely French hillside overlooking a village where victory is about to be celebrated—Su-san and a lovable old French farmer and his lovable old horse. There's some wistful conversation, then he invites her home to have some soup with his wife and himself. In the play, before that invitation, the farmer says he's not going down to join the celebration. "Myself, I work. A farmer. Like any other day. The Frenchman works or starves. He is the piss. The shit. The lowest of the low." Susan completely disregards him and ends with her joyous last line, "There will be days and days and days like this." The film, too, ends with that line, but the softening of the farmer's dialogue eliminates the play's clear signal at the (chronological) start of her story that the war has made little change in many people's lives and that she is incapable of seeing it. The cuff links and the sweetened farmer are among the alterations that slacken tensions around and within Susan.

THE SUSAN is Meryl Streep. I've been fervent about her since her drama school days, but I think her performance here—excepting *Still of the Night*, which was just a blip on the screen for all concerned—is her least successful film work to date. This is a relative statement, relative to Streep's gifts, which easily embrace the emotional range of this role. But her voice sounds limited, uninflected, insufficiently interesting. Vocal richness has long been a problem for her, I think; and here she is surrounded by English actors brought up in a tradition where the voice is not just a means of making words audible but is the instrument with which acting begins. That tradition is not one of hammy scooping and gliding but of belief in the magic of the word itself and of the finest shades of inflection. Streep has several big scenes to play with John Gielgud, the emperor of this tradition; one long scene with Ian McKellen, who is very adept in it; and a great deal to play with Charles Dance, who is decently competent in it. All of them, merely by using their techniques truthfully, make Streep sound vocally lackluster. Even Tracey Ullman, a young woman of limited experience, has, simply by virtue of an ear condi-

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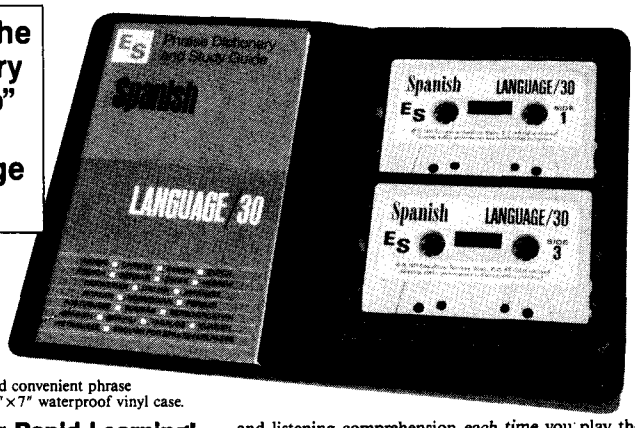

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tioned to England's English, more color than Streep. Unlike Streep's work with accents in *Sophie's Choice* and *Silkwood* and *The Seduction of Joe Tynan*, she seems here so concerned about merely sounding English that it absorbs much of her imaginative energy. (Her English role in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was in a quite different vein—lush romance.)

Gielgud, as an arrogant but honorable ambassador, is a high-comedy delight. McKellen, in his one long scene as a lofty foreign service official, embodies the dictum he pronounces: "Behavior is all." Dance, in the largest male role, is perfectly cast: he is winning enough to persuade us that Susan could feel fondly for him yet mild enough to let us understand that she might tire. As a cockney whom Susan selects to father a child in one of her attempts to replenish her life—an attempt that doesn't click biologically—Sting has aggressive sensitivity. Ullman, button-eyed and pert, is lively as Susan's chum, but her part is condensed to mute its counterpoint. In the original, this scattery young woman blunders her way up from bohemianism to give her life some purpose. This aspect of the play is present but dimmed in the film. Sam Neill, first widely visible in the Australian *My Brilliant Career*, is adequately taciturn as the secret-agent lover.

Fred Schepisi, also Australian, who directed the haunting *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, has a touch of David Lean: he suggests intimacy in the large scenes and sizable power in the intimate ones. Richard MacDonald's sets are first-class. He uses fireplaces as totems of change in Susan's life. In her first postwar flat, there's a small gas heater; in a later home, there's a mod fireplace set above floor level in a plaster wall; later, in her married home, there's a huge ornate hearth and mantel. Ian Baker, Schepisi's constant colleague, is one of three or four Australian cinematographers who have lately established themselves as peers of the best. Every moment of *Plenty* looks lovely without being beautiful.

In that postscript to *Plenty*, Hare said: "It's a common criticism of my work that I write about women whom I find admirable, but whom the audience dislikes," and he explains that what he's aiming at is ambiguity. He wants the audience to make the decision. My complaint about *Wetherby*, the fascinating film he wrote *and* directed (see adjoining box), was that I couldn't determine that he found his heroine admirable or anything else and that I didn't like or dislike her. What I felt was incompletion, not ambiguity. As for *Plenty*, in the original play there was never any doubt about liking Susan, by Hare or us, but the ambiguities of theme seemed to be more in Hare than in the work. The film discloses fewer ambiguities in him, more (questionable) clarity of purpose. Without actually traducing his ideas, he has somewhat smoothed out his fractious play according to the film world's needs for a star.

The vision behind the verse.

THE POETRY OF THE BIBLE

BY ROBERT ALTER

EXACTLY WHAT IS the poetry of the Bible, and what role does it play in giving form to the biblical religious vision? The second of these two questions obviously involves all sorts of imponderables. One would think that, by contrast, the first question should have a straightforward answer, but in fact there has been considerable confusion through the ages about where there is poetry in the Bible and about the principles on which that poetry works.

To begin with, biblical poetry is almost entirely a phenomenon of the Hebrew Bible. There are, of course, grandly poetic passages in the New Testament—perhaps most impressively in the Apocalypse—but only the *Magnificat* of Luke 1 is fashioned as formal verse. Readers of the Old Testament often cannot easily see where the poetry is supposed to be, because in the Authorized Version, which has been the text used by most English-speaking people, nothing is laid out as lines of verse. This confusing typographical procedure is in turn faithful to the Hebrew manuscript tradition, which runs everything together in dense, unpunctuated columns. (There are a few exceptions where there is a spacing out roughly corresponding to lines of verse, like the Song of the Sea, Exod. 15; Moses's Valedictory Song, Deut. 32; and an occasional manuscript of Psalms.)

What has accompanied this graphic leveling of poetry with prose in the text is a kind of cultural amnesia about biblical poetics. Over the centuries, Psalms was most clearly perceived as poetry, probably because of the actual musical indications in the texts and the obvious liturgical function of many of the poems. The status as poetry of the Song of Songs and Job, because of the lyric beauty of the one and the grandeur of the other, was also generally kept in sight, however farfetched the notions about the formal character of the verse in these books. Proverbs was somewhat more intermittently seen as poetry, and it was often not understood that the Prophets cast the larger part of their message in verse. Finally, it is only in our century that scholars have begun to realize to what extent the prose narratives of the Bible are studded with brief verse insets, usually introduced at dramatically justified or otherwise significant junctures in the stories.

Over the last two millennia—and for many, down to the present—to be a reader of biblical poetry has been rather like being a reader of Dryden and Pope coming from a culture that had no concept of rhyme: you would loosely grasp that the language was intricately organized as verse, but with the uneasy feeling that you were missing something essential you couldn't quite define. The central informing convention of biblical verse was rediscovered in the mid-18th century by a scholarly Anglican bishop, Robert Lowth. He proposed that lines of biblical verse comprised two or three "members" (in

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what follows, I shall call them "versets") parallel to each other in meaning.

Like many a good discovery, Bishop Lowth's perception has not fared as well as it might. The realization soon dawned that some of what he called parallelism was not semantically parallel at all. This led to a sometimes confusing proliferation of subcategories of parallelism, and, in our own time, to various baby-with-bathwater operations in which syllable count, units of syntax, or some other formal feature was proposed as the basis for biblical poetry, parallelism being relegated to a secondary or incidental position. I think that some of these confusions can be sorted out, and that, by so doing, we may be able to see more clearly the distinctive strength and beauty of the biblical poems; for an understanding of the poetic system is always a precondition to reading the poem well.

Semantic parallelism, though by no means invariably present, is a prevalent feature of biblical verse. That is, if the poet says "hearken" in the first verset, he is likely to say something like "listen" or "heed" in the second verset. This parallelism of meaning, which is often joined with a balancing of rhythmic stress between versets and sometimes by parallel syntactic patterns as well, would seem to have played a role roughly analogous to that of iambic pentameter in Shakespeare's dramatic verse. That is to say, it is an underlying formal model that the poet feels free to modify, or occasionally to abandon altogether. In longer biblical poems, the departure from parallelism is sometimes used to mark the end of a distinct segment; elsewhere parallelism is occasionally set aside in favor of a small-scale narrative sequence within the line; and a few poets would appear simply to be less fond of the symmetries of parallelism than others.

NOW, the greatest stumbling block in approaching biblical poetry has been the misconception that parallelism implies synonymity, saying the same thing twice in different words. I would argue that good poetry at all times is an intellectually robust activity to which such laziness is alien, that poets understand more subtly than linguists that there are no true synonyms, and that the ancient Hebrew poets are constantly advancing their meanings where the casual ear catches mere repetition. Not surprisingly, some lines of biblical poetry approach a condition of equivalent statement between the versets more than others. Thus: "He preserves the paths of justice,/and the way of His faithful ones He guards" (Prov. 2:8; this and all the rather literal translations that follow are my own). By my count, however, such instances of nearly synonymous restatement occur in less than a quarter of the lines of verse in the biblical corpus. The dominant pattern is a focusing, heightening, or specification of ideas, images, actions, themes from one verset to the next. If something is broken in the first verset, it is smashed or shattered in the second verset; if a city is destroyed in the first verset, it is turned into a heap of rubble in the second. What this means to us as readers of biblical poetry is that instead of listening to an imagined drumbeat of repetitions, we need constantly to look for something new happening from one part of the line to the next.

THE CASE of numbers in parallelism is especially instructive. If the underlying principle were really synonymity, you would expect to find, say, "forty" in one verset and "two score" in the other. In point of fact, the almost invariable rule is that you have to go up on the numerical scale from first to second verset, either by one, or by a decimal multiple, or a decimal multiple of the first number added to itself. And as with numbers, so with images and ideas, there is a steady amplification or intensification of the original terms. Here is a paradigmatic numerical instance: "How could one pursue a thousand,/and two put ten thousand to flight?" (Deut. 32:30). An amusing illustration of scholarly misconception about what is involved poetically in such cases is a common contemporary view of the triumphal song chanted by the Israelite women: "Saul has smitten his thousands,/David, his tens of thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). It has been suggested that Saul's anger over these words reflects his paranoia, for he should have realized that in poetry it is a formulaic necessity to move from a thousand to ten thousand, and so the women really intended no slight to him. Such a suggestion assumes that somehow poetry conjures with formulaic devices indifferent to meaning. Saul may indeed have been paranoid, but he knew perfectly well how the Hebrew poetry of his era worked—he understood that meanings were quite point-

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edly developed from one half of the line to the other. In fact, the prose narrative in 1 Sam. 18 strongly confirms the rightness of Saul's "reading," for the people are clearly said to be extravagantly enamored of David as they are not of Saul.

Let me offer a few examples of this dynamic movement within the line, and then try to suggest something about the compelling religious and visionary ends that are served by this distinctive poetics. For the sake of convenience, I have chosen all my examples from Psalms; the italics in the second versets indicate the point at which seeming repetition becomes a focusing, a heightening, a concretization of the original material:

> Let me hear joy and gladness,/let *the bones you have crushed exult* (Ps. 51:10); How long, O Lord, will You be perpetually incensed,/*like a flame* Your wrath *will burn* (Ps. 79:5); He counts the number of the stars,/each one He *calls by name* (Ps. 147:4).

The possibilities of complication of meaning are more various than I have space to illustrate here, but an important second category of development between versets should be mentioned. Here is a pair of lines from Psalms in which what happens within the line is parallelism of a rather special kind that involves something other than intensification: "The teaching of his God is in his heart,/his footsteps will not stumble.//The wicked spies out the just,/and seeks to kill him" (Ps. 37:31-32). In the first of these lines, the statements of the two versets do correspond to each other, but the essential nature of the correspondence is causal: if you keep the Lord's teaching, you can count on avoiding calamity. In the next line, causation is allied with temporal sequence. That is, to try to kill someone is a more extreme act of malice than to lie in wait for him, and hence it is an "intensification"; but the two are different points in a miniature narrative continuum, first the lying in wait, then the attempt to kill. One sees the same pattern in the following image of destruction, where the first verset gives us the breaking down of fortress walls, the second verset the destruction of the fortress itself: "You burst through all his barriers,/You turned his strongholds to rubble" (Ps. 89:41).

It is sometimes asked what happened to narrative verse in ancient Israel, for where the principal narratives of most other ancient cultures are in poetry, narrative proper in the Hebrew Bible is almost exclusively reserved for prose. One partial answer would be that the narrative impulse, which for a variety of reasons is withdrawn from the larger structure of the poem, often reappears on a more microscopic level, within the line, or in a brief sequence of lines, in the articulation of the poem's imagery, as in the examples just cited. I would add that in quite a few instances this narrativity within the line is perfectly congruent with what I have described as the parallelism of intensification. Both elements are beautifully transparent in these two versets from Isaiah: "Like a pregnant woman whose time draws near,/she trembles, she screams in her birth-pangs" (Isa. 26:17). The second verset, of course, is not only more concretely focused than the first, but also represents a later moment in the same process—from very late pregnancy to the midst of labor.

THE ordinary reader, who thinks with good reason of the Bible first of all as a corpus of religious writings, may wonder what all this has to do with the urgent spiritual concerns of the ancient Hebrew poets. I don't think there is ever a one-to-one correspondence between poetic systems and views of reality, but I would propose that a particular poetics may encourage or reinforce a particular orientation toward reality. For all the untold reams of commentary on the Bible, this remains a sadly neglected question. One symptomatic case in point: a standard work on the basic forms of prophetic discourse by the German scholar Claus Westermann never once mentions the poetic vehicle used by the Prophets, and makes no formal distinction between, say, a short prophetic statement in prose by Elijah and a complex poem by Isaiah. Any intrinsic connection between the kind of poetry the Prophets spoke and the nature of their message is simply never contemplated.

Biblical poetry, as I have tried to show, is characterized by an intensifying or narrative development within the line; and, quite often, this "horizontal" movement is then projected downward in a "vertical" focusing movement through a sequence of lines or even through a whole poem. What this means is that the poetry of the Bible is concerned above all with dynamic process moving toward some culmination. The account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis might serve as a model for the conception of reality that underlies most of this body of poetry: from day to day new elements are added in a continuous process that culminates in the seventh day, the primordial sabbath. It would require a close reading of whole poems to see fully how this model is variously manifested in the different genres of biblical poetry, but I can at least sketch out the ways in which the model is perceptible in verse addressed to personal, philosophical, and historical issues.

THE poetry of Psalms has evinced an extraordinary power to speak to the lives of countless individual readers, and has echoed through the work of writers as different as Augustine, George Herbert, Paul Claudel, and Dylan Thomas. Some of the power of the psalms may be attributed to their being such effective "devotions upon emergent occasions," as John Donne, another poet strongly moved by these biblical poems, called a collection of his meditations. The sense of emergency virtually defines the most numerically predominant subgenre of psalm, the supplication. The typical—though of course not invariable—movement of the supplication is a rising line of intensity that heads toward a climax of terror or desperation. The paradigmatic supplication would sound something like this: You have forgotten me, O Lord; You have hidden Your face from me; You have thrown me to the mercies of my enemies; I totter on the brink of death, plunge into the darkness of the Pit. At this intolerable point of culmination, when there is nothing left for the speaker but the terrible contemplation of his own imminent extinction, a sharp reversal takes place. The speaker either prays to God to draw him out of the abyss or, in some poems, confidently asserts that God is in fact already working this wondrous rescue. One sees why these poems have reverberated so strongly in the moments of crisis, spiritual or physical, of so many readers, and I would suggest that the distinctive capacity of biblical poetics to advance along a steeply inclined plane of mounting intensities does much to help the poets imaginatively realize both the experience of crisis and the dramatic reversal at the end.

This momentum of intensification is felt somewhat differently in the text

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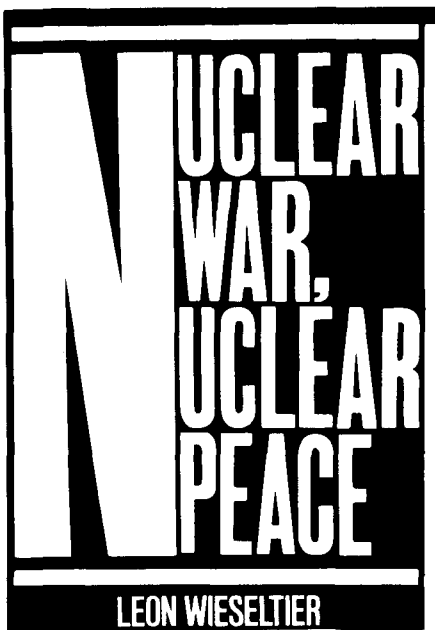
that is in many respects the most astonishing poetic achievement in the biblical corpus—the Book of Job. Where the psalm-poets provided voices for the anguish and exultation of real people, Job is a fictional character, as the folktale stylization of the introductory prose narrative means to alert us. In the rounds of debate with the three Friends, poetry spoken by fictional figures is used to ponder the enigma of arbitrary suffering that seems a constant element of the human condition. One of the ways in which we are invited to gauge the difference between the Friends and Job is through the different kinds of poetry they utter—the Friends stringing together beautifully polished clichés (sometimes almost a parody of the poetry of Proverbs and Psalms), Job making constant disruptive departures in the images he uses, in the extraordinary muscularity of his language line after line. The poetry Job speaks is an instrument forged to sound the uttermost depths of suffering, and so he adopts movements of intensification to focus in and in on his anguish. The intolerable point of culmination is not followed, as in Psalms, by a confident prayer for salvation, but by a death wish, the only relief imagined being the extinguishing of life and mind, or by a kind of desperate shriek of outrage to the Lord.

WHEN GOD finally answers Job out of the whirlwind, He responds to Job's remarkable poetry with an order of poetry formally allied to the verse that has preceded it, but larger in scope and greater in power. (From the compositional viewpoint, it is the sort of risk only a writer of genius could take and get away with.) That is, God picks up many of Job's key images, especially from the death-wish poem with which Job began (chapter 3), and His discourse is shaped by a powerful movement of intensification, coupled with a narrative sweep from creation to the play of natural forces to the teeming world of animal life. But whereas Job's intensities are centripetal and, necessarily, egocentric, God's intensities carry us back and forth through the pulsating vital movements of the whole created world. The culmination of the poem God speaks is not a cry of self or a dream of self snuffed out, but the terrible beauty of the Leviathan, on the uncanny borderline between zoology and mythology, where what is fierce and strange, beyond the ken and conquest of man, is the climactic manifestation of a splendidly providential creation that merely anthropomorphic notions cannot grasp.

Finally, this general predisposition to a poetic apprehension of urgent climactic process leads in the Prophets to what amounts to a radically new view of history. Of course I don't want to reduce all thinking to principles of poetics, but I would like to suggest that there is a particular momentum in ancient Hebrew poetry that helps impel the poets toward rather special construals of their historical circumstances. If a Prophet wants to make vivid in verse a process of impending disaster, even, let us say, with the limited conscious aim of bringing his complacent and wayward audience to its senses, the intensifying logic of his medium may lead him to statements of an ultimate and cosmic character. Thus Jeremiah, imagining the havoc an invading Babylonian army will wreak: "I see the earth, and, look, chaos and void,/the heavens—their light is gone.//I see the mountains, and, look, they quake,/and all the hills shudder" (Jer. 4:23-24). He goes on in the same vein, continuing to draw on the language of Genesis to evoke a dismaying world where creation itself has been reversed.

A similar process is at work in the various prophecies of consolation of Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah: national restoration, in the development from literal to hyperbolic, from fact to fantastic elaboration, that is intrinsic to biblical poetry, is not just a return from exile or the reestablishment of political autonomy, but a blossoming of the desert, a straightening out of all that is crooked, a wonderful fusion of seedtime and reaping, a perfect peace in which calf and lion dwell together and a little child leads them. The matrix of both the apocalyptic imagination and the messianic vision of redemption may well be the distinctive structure of ancient Hebrew verse. This would be the most historically fateful illustration of a fundamental rule bearing on form and meaning in the Bible. We need to read this poetry well because it is not merely a means of heightening or dramatizing the religious perceptions of the biblical writers—it is the dynamic shaping instrument through which those perceptions discovered their immanent truth. □



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ONE NATION DIVISIBLE

Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family
by Shirley Christian

(Random House, 338 pp., $19.95)

The independence of Mexico and Central America began paradoxically: with a declaration of loyalty to Fernando VII, who had been deposed by Napoleon in 1808. When Fernando regained the Spanish crown in 1814, however, he didn't recover his colonies. Embroiled in civil war, they had broken up into half a dozen countries. From listening to their continued claims of loyalty to the king, no one would have imagined the practical outcome.

Something similar occurred later in the century, when liberal and conservative parties in the Central American states were locked in a struggle for power. All their political theories implied a democratic setting, where the instinct to resort to armed force would be eliminated. But all these movements were led by armed commanders. Listening to the liberal or the conservative declarations, then, no one would have imagined the reality of the new democracies.

The same thing is happening now with the revolutionary rhetoric of Mexico, Cuba, and Nicaragua. According to official statements, the revolution continues: the people are in power and they keep on defeating their enemies. In the case of Mexico and Cuba, the contrast with reality has long since become transparent. But not much is commonly known about the Nicaraguan reality. For President Reagan, it's not the Nicaraguan people but the Soviet Union that is in power, through its proxy Cuba; the Soviets' ultimate goal, as Reagan sees it, is to seize power in Mexico and Central America, although freedom fighters are struggling against this heroically. For President Ortega, the Nicaraguan people not only defeated Somoza; they also routed the bourgeoisie that was backed by Yankee imperialism, and for that reason they are confronting not a civil war but an invasion by mercenaries, a prelude to an American invasion.

Reagan and Ortega both enjoy accusing and provoking each other, even with gestures of questionable political value. (Ortega takes a trip to Moscow; Reagan enforces an embargo.) Listening to them, it's easy to identify emotions and principles, but hard to get any clear idea of the situation in Nicaragua. Shirley Christian chose to attend to something less clamorous, but more revealing: the reality behind the rhetoric. She has examined the practical consequences of all the many declarations of theory. She lets events, slowly assembled, speak for themselves.

Her book begins frugally, by explaining what makes up a Spanish surname and providing a cursory list and description of the central characters. As those characters congregate, it becomes clear that they are the dramatis personae of a tragedy—a tragedy inflicted on a small country as a result of the ideological passions and interests that divide its educated minority. "The people in power" are not made up of workers or peasants, but of this educated minority; it is descended from the very families that were in power at the time of the Somozas and even before. The "mercenary" leaders and the "freedom fighters" are their relatives or old friends or schoolmates, fellow workers or comrades in arms of "the people in power."

Thus, for example, Arturo Cruz, the opposition's failed candidate for the presidency (and former director of the central bank, member of the government junta, and the Sandinista government's ambassador to Washington), is the uncle of Luis Carrión Cruz, one of the nine revolutionary commandants who make up the military junta, who in turn is the son of a wealthy banker from the years of the Somozas (who also held a position in the Sandinista government). Carlos Carrión Cruz, brother of Luis, is the national coordinator of the Sandinista Youth. His cousin Javier is a commander of a military zone.

Ernesto and Fernando Cardenal, brothers, priests, and Sandinista ministers (in charge of culture and education), are the cousins of Pablo Antonio Cuadra, the director of *La Prensa*, the opposition's sole daily newspaper. They are also related to José Francisco Cardenal, who is in armed opposition to the Sandinista regime (after having participated in armed opposition to Somoza). And, of course, related to Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, who, after taking up arms against Somoza, became the focus of civil opposition with his newspaper *La Prensa*. He was so successful in this that his assassination backfired: it provoked a general strike that was a pivotal point in the overthrow of Somoza.

There have been other Chamorros in power for more than a century. Four of them were presidents: Fruto (1853-55), Pedro Joaquín (1875-79), Emiliano (1917-21 and 1926), Diego Manuel (1921-23). Actually, Carlos Chamorro Barrios, son of the assassinated newspaperman, now runs *Barricada*, the official daily newspaper of the Sandinistas. His uncle Xavier Chamorro Cardenal runs the *Nuevo Diario*, also a Sandinista paper. His sister Claudia Chamorro Barrios is an official within the Ministry of Culture. His brother Pedro Joaquín founded the Sandinista Social Democratic Party (which was prohibited from using the adjective "Sandinista" by the military junta, which controls the term as if it were its own exclusive trademark), was codirector of *La Prensa*, and is now in civil opposition in Costa Rica. His mother, Violeta Barrios, widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, was one of the five initial members of the government junta and is now in civil opposition within Nicaragua, as owner and editor of *La Prensa*. Fernando "The Black" Chamorro, who in 1978 staged a suicidal attack on Somoza's bunkers by launching rockets from the Hilton Hotel, is now in armed opposition against the Sandinistas. Javier Chamorro is the Nicaraguan ambassador to the ONU (National Unity Organization). In short, there have been Chamorros in power across the political spectrum and in very different regimes since the last century. What hasn't changed is their position of privilege as national leaders.

THESE realities are essential for an understanding of the situation in Nicaragua, but they don't appear in the superficial judgments made either for or against the Sandinista government. Luckily, Shirley Christian took the initiative to seek out the facts behind the clichés. Like everyone in Managua, for example, she repeatedly heard the declaration by a peasant used every

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day to begin the television evening news program: "Now I'm a free man, as free as the light of day." There are many ways to listen to a commercial—indifference, acceptance, rejection, ridicule—but Christian decided to have a conversation with the peasant. She looked for him, found him, and interviewed him. That's how she discovered that he was furious: everyone was making fun of him, they had even given him the nickname "the free man." His sentence, it turned out, had been taken out of context, recorded fraudulently, and played daily. He had even made a legal complaint demanding that the broadcast be suspended.

DURING the 19th century, the recourse to armed struggle generally went so far as to invite foreign aid. Mexico initiated its fight for independence by rejecting the foreign influence of Napoleon I in Spain, but it accepted, on its own territory, aid from Napoleon III, at the invitation of the conservatives, who wanted to crush the liberals. In Nicaragua the liberals called on William Walker, the southern pirate who had previously seized La Paz in Mexico and had declared himself president of the "Republic of Sonora and Sinaloa." Walker did away with the conservatives, but he didn't hand over the country to the liberals; instead he proclaimed himself president of Nicaragua and demanded that it be annexed to the United States. Fortunately, he trampled in passing on the Nicaraguan business interests of Cornelius Vanderbilt, whose antagonism, joined with the rare solidarity of all the Central American nations, put an end to his adventure.

The tradition of appealing to foreign military aid to support an indigenous faction died out in Mexico, but it continued to exist in Nicaragua. This explains an astonishing fact: for many years it only took 100 Marines stationed there for the American ambassador in Managua to have control of the country. At the time Nicaragua had half a million inhabitants; obviously it would have been impossible to subdue them with only a hundred Marines. The real force of the occupation lay, rather, in the fact that the various Nicaraguan factions were more interested in wooing the ambassador, persuading him to back their interests and positions—essentially turning him into a proconsul—than in negotiating among themselves. Facing the United States, they gave up resorting to armed struggle and chose to negotiate. Among themselves, they neither renounced arms nor opted for the bargaining table.

Augusto César Sandino (1895-1934) and Anastasio Somoza García (1896-1956) were liberal leaders in this tradition, both allied to Juan Bautista Sacasa. (Sandino took up arms on Sacasa's behalf in 1926; Somoza, Sacasa's nephew by marriage, served as his chief of the National Guard in 1933 and in the end overthrew Sacasa in 1936.) In 1925, when the Marines withdrew, believing they had left everything in order (a conservative president and a liberal vice president: the same Sacasa), conflict broke out once again. Another conservative leader, Emiliano Chamorro, brought down the president, forcing him to resign, but without allowing Sacasa to replace him as he was entitled by law. The liberals took up arms, and they wouldn't lay them down until the Marines came back and negotiated elections to be supervised by the United States.

Earlier Sandino had offered to lay down his arms if the North Americans (instead of the conservatives) would take charge of the government until the elections. But the new *pax Americana*, which the liberal consensus accepted, seemed contemptible to him, and he chose to continue the fight. Still, he sought foreign support (in Mexico, which proved a disappointment) and continued fighting until 1933, when the Marines withdrew for a second time, leaving Sacasa as president and Somoza as head of the National Guard. Although Sandino distrusted Somoza, he felt his war was over, and he retreated to a farm.

THE arrival of Sacasa to the presidency, at last, was like Fernando VII's recovery of the throne. Sandino's goals appeared to have been fulfilled: the Marine infantrymen were leaving, the liberals had triumphed, and the vice president who had been passed over was attaining the presidency. But the liberal victory depended on a difficult balance resting on four points: Sacasa held the presidency, Sandino the prestige, Somoza the National Guard, and the North American Embassy the proconsulate. Somoza established a dictatorship of long duration from only one of these points: he assassinated Sandino, his ally in the party; he overthrew

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Sacasa, his uncle by marriage and protector; and he took over the political functions of the embassy and became, effectively, an imperial proconsul, with friendships, contacts, and direct political jobbery in Washington, which placed him above the ambassador and turned him into an internal arbiter, an administrator of their support and favors. By integrating all these elements in his person, Somoza became as well a liberal/conservative leader who put an end to armed struggle between liberals and conservatives. Along the way he also absorbed a good part of the nation's wealth into his personal fortune.

Somoza was assassinated by a young poet, almost an omen of the educated opposition that finally brought down his son: the coalition of poetry, *La Prensa*, a new generation of journalists, writers, priests, professors, students, who switched from books to weapons. They existed across the entire political spectrum—conservatives, liberals, social democrats, democratic Christians, Christians for Socialism, Castristas. Their ideological diversity reflected their common origin: they were the privileged minority that had access to the world of ideas, and which argued endlessly about how to convert a dictatorship to a better system of government for Nicaragua, and what that system would consist of.

THE brutality of the Somoza regime had succeeded in uniting three million Nicaraguans in a jubilant explosion. Nicaragua was a festival. Everything seemed possible after July 19, 1979. But while the celebrations and debates continued, a minority within the minority—nine students who had taken up arms under the remote inspiration of Sandino but, more directly, under the influence of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara—didn't waste any time with celebrations. Within a few hours they had seized center stage and its microphone. Within a few days they had taken control of the treasury and the banking establishments. Within a few weeks they had seized weapons from the National Guard, from the civilians who had spontaneously risen up against Somoza, and from the international volunteers (some of whom had been driven out); also from the police, from the intelligence services, from the prisons. They immediately took over Somoza's properties, some foreign businesses, and all foreign trade. Within a few months all the threads of Somoza's power (even North American aid) were under the control of the new directors of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN). In the salons, meanwhile, the festivities continued. Enthusiasts were arriving from all over the world to toast the happiness and success of Nicaragua. No one knew what was going on. They knew only that at last Somoza had fallen and everything seemed possible.

Years later Ramiro Gurdian, the president of the Union of Nicaraguan Agricultural Producers (UPANIC), explained to Shirley Christian why he had believed in the new government:

> I saw so many other democratic countries supporting it, all the Andean Pact countries, Costa Rica, the United States, also *La Prensa*, the archbishop, the Church, Alfonso Robelo, Edén Pastora. So I thought, if the United States and Carlos Andrés Pérez are backing this revolution, how can it be wrong? I mean, they are respectable people, and they must know, I thought, what is going on. But I learned my lesson. They didn't know what was going on.

If this confession sounds pathetic, it's even more pathetic that the president of the United States was in exactly the same position. Just two weeks before Somoza's fall, Jimmy Carter didn't know whether the leaders of the FSLN were Marxists. In a meeting at the White House at the beginning of July in 1979,

> Defense Secretary Harold Brown said the Defense Department assessment was that the Sandinistas were dominated by Marxists-Leninists. Carter asked some of the others present whether they agreed with that, and at least some of them said they did.

How is it possible that the president of the United States didn't have accurate information on this point well in advance? How could it be that he would have negotiated with groups who aspired to power after Somoza without having any clear idea of what the alternatives might be? Imagine if, at the liberation of France, the Allies had been as poorly informed about the various groups within the French resistance. Who knows whether General de Gaulle could have gained control as the leader of the new regime? But then, France is a first-class nation; it's only natural that there should be better information about France than about Nicaragua.

It's unfortunate that the kind of attention the Third World receives is third-rate. The United States, Europe, and Japan study one another and negotiate with their first-class people. It would be very strange if their best diplomats, military men, bankers, executives, industrialists, journalists, professors were assigned to Third World nations. Except when first-class problems develop.

This has the effect of creating a tragic cycle. It makes perfect sense that the partners of a large firm wouldn't deal directly with their smallest clients. And yet the clients' problems, though they may appear to be on a ridiculously small scale, can mean life or death; and the clients may receive disastrous attention from a sorcerer's apprentice who, riding on the reputation of another great firm, is given everyone's confidence until the problem gets out of hand, sometimes too late. It makes perfect sense that Third World nations should receive credits determined by third-rate bankers, until the debt becomes a nightmare worthy of the attention of the world's best bankers. Many problems in small countries, which mean life or death for them, are in the hands of military men, bankers, journalists, who would never be assigned to life-and-death situations in their own countries.

The concluding paragraphs of Christian's book tell of this tragic cycle:

> The bitter lesson for the United States is that a democracy—especially one that allows broad participation in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy—cannot let a situation reach a point that demands black and white choices between national security and national conscience. The United States should not allow itself to fall into the trap of having to accept, in an area as closely tied to it as Central America, either a repressive right-wing dictatorship because it is not threatening to U.S. national security or a repressive left-wing dictatorship in exchange for commitments not to overthrow a neighboring government or acquire MiGs.
>
> The hour was late for this lesson to be applied in Nicaragua. Those who wanted democracy in Nicaragua were left in a vise, forced to accept that their goals were hostage to other people's priorities—the level of weaponry acquired, or the degree of Sandinista support for guerrillas elsewhere. The establishment of a totalitarian regime, tragically, was seen as a secondary matter. As so often in the past, Nicaraguans faced the bitter realization that their own needs—their own dreams—were subordinated to matters beyond their borders.

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Indeed, perhaps the best illustration of this tragic cycle may be this very book. After all the clichés and all the wishful thinking, when it may be too late, the Nicaraguan problem finally merits a book of first-class reporting. Shirley Christian has made long visits to Nicaragua quite frequently; she knows the condition of the country, has interviewed the central protagonists, read the books and the newspapers, and prepared a very clear synthesis that collects and comments on the events from more than a single point of view. Only now, unfortunately, do we know what was going on.

GABRIEL ZAID

Gabriel Zaid is a member of the editorial board of *Vuelta*. This review was translated from the Spanish by Elena Brunet.

SEEING AS BELIEVING

Cahiers du Cinéma
The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave
edited by Jim Hillier

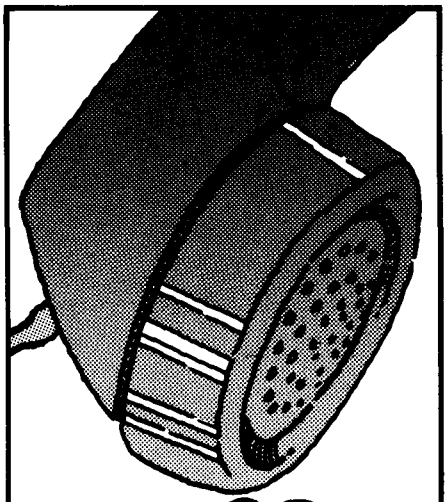
(Harvard University Press, 312 pp., $22.50)

The French have dominated the world of critical theory since 1945 with a succession of different schools. The existential-phenomenological school that flourished immediately after the Second World War has been succeeded by several other schools, imperial at home and abroad. Thus it's especially noteworthy that French film theory has only in recent decades joined the prevailing mainstream(s); until the middle 1960s, dominant film theory in France was markedly distinct from what was happening in most French criticism around it.

The fount of that film theory was the monthly journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, founded in 1951 and still, though quite differently, flourishing. This book, edited by Jim Hillier, an English film teacher, is the first of four projected anthologies that will cover the journal's whole existence. To read this anthology drawn from the first *Cahiers* decade is to be struck again by its singularity against the then-current critical landscape; more, it's a bit like living through those critical years again, with their bursts of excitement and stimulation, their boldness and silliness, their blood-boiling irritations, their unsettling insights—all seen now, of course, with clearer view of what is lastingly valuable.

In 1947 the critic and evangelist of film André Bazin had joined a bimonthly called *La Revue du Cinéma*. In 1951, along with two colleagues from that magazine, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Lo Duca, Bazin founded the monthly *Cahiers*, of which he remained coeditor until his early death in 1958. Some contributors came along from the *Revue*, and new contributors emerged, all high-spirited, all communally fervent in their work despite their differences. The leading names, besides the editors, were Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Pierre Kast, Amédée Ayfre, and Luc Moullet. Each was very much himself—Kast was a Marxist, Ayfre was a priest—yet these men and others jointly formulated, directly and indirectly, a critical view that must be called centripetal, a view that took them *into* film as into a new continent. It was no ivory-tower view, aloof and precious: their criticism was energized by the world around them. But the criteria by which they judged were found, for the most part, within film itself, were not brought in from outside.

Still, many of the reasons for this inward movement were apparently connected with the world outside. All the big *Cahiers* figures were distinctly younger than the Sartre-Camus group that was influential elsewhere. About half of the *Cahiers* people were in their early 20s; they had been too young for military service in the war but had lived through the Occupation and had come out full of urgent hungers. To general-



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ize, the Sartre-Camus generation, old enough to have been sickened by the falsity of past acceptances, came out of the war biting every idea to test it like possibly counterfeit coin. This younger group was impatient both with the past that had brought about the present and with the present that was chiefly concerned with bitterness about the past. These younger men seemingly wanted to wash their hands of the ledger-keeping of history, to put their vigor into fresh visions in a field much less trammeled by the past than were others. Where other critics were questioning various faiths, these men had found a faith.

TWO specifics about film itself encouraged this subscription, helped to form their new critical view. First, these critics—France itself—had inherited a dominant approach to filmmaking that had been molded under Vichy and the Occupation. A new and important book, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation* by Evelyn Ehrlich (Columbia University Press), deals with this topic. Ehrlich says of this dominant postwar French cinema:

> Where once the lined and irregular features of Jean Gabin had suffered in the misty lower depths of the French urban landscape, the classical perfection of Jean Marais's profile now reigned over the countryside of some indefinable era of France's past. . . . The warmth of the prewar French cinema . . . had been replaced by the iciness of long shots and perfectly composed images, in which actors seemed to be not human beings but well-trained mechanisms, engineered rather than born. . . . The tendency in the French cinema that characterized the period from 1940-1960 was labeled the "cinema of quality" by the young critics of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s.

That "cinema of quality" was so thoroughly attacked by the angry *Cahiers* critics that the attack carried backward into previous decades and nearly buried some previous genuine accomplishments. (So many babies were emptied out with the bathwater that in 1981-83 the Museum of Modern Art in New York ran a huge retrospective of nearly 200 prewar French films to reestablish at least some of the wonderful work done earlier in the century.)

A second strong impulse toward interiority came from the flood of American films, many of them not new, of which these young men had been deprived. It was a happy cataclysm. The vigor of these American films, their litheness, their reveling in popular beliefs and fabricated aspirations—in contrast with the marmoreal classiness of much recent French film—were manna to the *Cahiers* people. I'm also convinced that the sheer fact of American space, literally and in the figurative sense of possibility, intoxicated them.

Still, a third factor was extremely influential on the *Cahiers* group: Italian neo-realism. Much more immediately than most French directors, postwar Italian filmmakers had responded with truthful films about Italian life made with truthful means. Quite dissimilar in provenance from the Hollywood pictures that also excited *Cahiers*, the Italian films fed a different hunger. Says Hillier:

> *Cahiers* admired the American cinema but . . . it was not a cinema they could aspire to emulate. . . . *Cahiers* disliked the typical French films of the period. . . . But Italian cinema represented something which French filmmakers *could* aspire to, and Rossellini in particular exemplified both moral values *Cahiers* could generally espouse and a "modern," non-academic photographic style and non-literary narrative style which suited both their tastes and the production conditions and possibilities in France.

HERE OCCURS the term "style," and this is absolutely the key term in the *Cahiers* lexicon. These critics needed an aesthetics that allowed them to accommodate both Rossellini and Nicholas Ray, that explained their passion for both. Because of its wide reach, because it included not only all types of film but also subjects that the outside world despised, such an aesthetics would have to be intracinematic. I don't mean to imply *Cahiers* head-scratching, a desperation to find a creed that fit their circumstances: the creed grew simultaneously with the passion. That creed was based on style, on the perception of personal style in a director's work. The style became the touchstone of his work, and it was the sheer maintenance of that style that determined the quality of his work—every other consideration was quite secondary.

This approach to film criticism they called the *politique des auteurs*, the policy of authors, to indicate both how they were judging and that they believed a film should *have* an author, a perceptibly controlling artist. The phrase itself has been subjected to extended semantic analysis through the years, which I skip. But even the quickest examination of the idea shows that it ordered a reshuffling of priorities. If cinematic style was to be the chief criterion, then cinematic qualities took top place in judgment. This meant the relegation to at least second place of all matters that other film critics had prized: theme, story, dramatic construction, social relevance, psychological depth, quality of writing, even of acting. It meant giving first, if not sole, place to elements that were exclusively cinematic, that pertained to no other art: composition of frame, movement of camera, lighting, editing, use of sound, rhythm, concepts of space, and more. And this meant that many films that others had looked on as pulp or worse became virtually sacred, because of the way they were made. Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* is as good an example as any. Ray himself said it was made from "a completely valueless novel"; but Truffaut called the film "a Western that is dream-like, magical, unreal to a degree, delirious." And this aesthetics meant, said *Cahiers*, that artists of high order could be found working in the Hollywood mills: because the first consideration was what they accomplished as directors, no matter what the quality of the script or even of the performers. And *this* meant only a small step to seeing virtue in necessity, to believing that the tension between Hollywood conditions and the great Hollywood director was fertilizing and necessary.

OUT OF the *auteur* concept at least two other theoretical arguments grew. One was the subject of genre. The importance of genre—the "category" film: Western, musical, *film noir*, and so on—was much debated as an adjunct of style. The achievement of style within a genre was a microcosm of achievement within the Hollywood industry itself, except that the genre could actually be helpful as supplier of reference and perspective. Rivette talks about the "self-validating genres . . . in American cinema," and says that he thinks "it's impossible to do anything worthwhile in European cinema" except from the premise of "the nonexistence of basic genres." (This was before "spaghetti Westerns.") If this sounds like regret that all filmmaking in the world was not Hollywood-industrialized and cut up into grids of genre, we must note that the very highest *Cahiers* regard went to direc-

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tors quite free of either genre or Hollywood: Bergman, Fellini, Visconti, Dreyer, Renoir, Bresson, Buñuel, and Mizoguchi. Still the genre argument was a club with which to beat the "cinema of quality," to elevate intrinsic film elements.

And there was a major debate on the question of montage versus the held shot and depth of field—a question still mooted. Bazin famously championed the held shot against the Eisenstein-Pudovkin views of the past, on the ground that the director's function was to reveal reality, not solipsistically to rearrange it. But some of his young friends strenuously disagreed. Godard, for example:

> . . . the most delicate nuance of the soul must be treated with greater emphasis. . . . I would even see in that spatial discontinuity occasioned by shot changes—which certain devotees of the 'ten-minute take' make a point of despising—the reason for the greater part of the truth which this figure of style contains.

Perhaps the involuntary arbitrator of this dispute, for *Cahiers* anyway, was Orson Welles, whose early works made powerful statements on both sides.

FROM *Cahiers* writings of the 1950s (not to mention *auteur* criticism in general), it's easy to quote ridiculous utterances. I limit myself to three. Stentorian banality: Fereydoun Hoveyda says that "every film is in some sense autobiographical." Inflated twaddle: Luc Moullet says that ". . . one can say that there is a difference between [Sam Fuller and Orson Welles] . . . of the same order as the one between Marlowe and Shakespeare. . . ." Herniated fervor: Rivette, praising Rossellini, says that "these are terms you will scarcely admit as evidence, but at least you will, I trust, understand them. (If not, God help you.)" To have read such utterances or descriptions of them as they appeared at the time in English, or were reflected in others' writings in English, was to suffer mild stomach cramp. Now, though they have no greater rationality, they almost evoke nostalgia for the fiery decade that produced them, and they may do the same for those too young to have been contemporaries because we all share the same greatly straitened film world of today.

Those young people of the 1950s who leapt into the *auteur* fold did so, I think, because it certified what they were already thinking and liking. In some degree, *auteur* criticism was the "I'm O.K.—you're O.K." of film aesthetics. If you loved pop films, the *Cahiers* critics confirmed that, for some of those films anyway, your reasons were aesthetically and spiritually deep, whether you had known it or not. Yet warnings about the limitations of the *auteur* theory came early from within the movement itself. Roger Leenhardt observed in 1957: "The notion of the total *auteur* is a myth all the same, because the director's craft requires specific capabilities which are not the same as those of a writer." The most notable warning came, in the same year, from Bazin. He acknowledged that *auteur* criticism is a "useful and fruitful approach," but warned that it "should be complemented by other approaches . . . without which the noun *auteur* remains but a halting concept. *Auteur*, yes, but what *of*?" (Almost 20 years later, in the introduction to his collected film criticism, Truffaut referred to the *politique des auteurs* as a theory that "was started by *Cahiers du Cinéma* and is forgotten in France, but still discussed in American periodicals.")

Still, with its imitations, shortcuts to grandeur, and all, the *auteur* theory now has a firm position in film's critical history. In terms of heat, I can think of no other period from which such a "hot" anthology as the present one could be drawn, except the early days of Soviet film. The fact that *Cahiers* began just before the Hollywood studio system was finally phased out was another piece of historical luck, which gave them product and productivity to write about. And however hyperbolic their praise of the studio manufacturers seemed or may still seem, their best praise went to figures free of that much-celebrated tension between industry and muse.

FURTHER, it would be untrue and ungrateful to deny that all of us, auteurist or not, learned—or could have learned—from them. If some of us refused (still vigorously refuse) to check our experience of life and of other arts at the film-theater door, nonetheless we were led to see even more in film intrinsics. (For me, Capra's *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* survives not only through its accessible populist sentiment, its good acting, and its neat dialogue but also through its lighting, which gives even the thinner moments some texture.)

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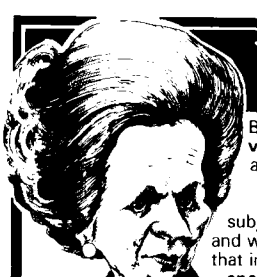

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And one hard fact cannot be argued: *auteur* theory led to *auteur* practice. Many *Cahiers* critics became directors, some of them significant. All the arts have had critics who became significant artists—Jacques Copeau and Giorgio Strehler, for theater examples. But the concentration here is extraordinary. The names are some of the names listed earlier as *Cahiers* critics. In fact, if, as is sometimes said, the best way to criticize existing art is to make a new artwork exemplifying your beliefs, then unquestionably the most influential film critic in the world since 1945 has been Godard, through his films.

But—or therefore—the *Cahiers* of the 1950s deserved a fuller anthology than this one. Hillier has selected interesting pieces, every one of them. He has grouped them in four sections—French Cinema, American Cinema, Italian Cinema, and Polemics—and has introduced each section well, along with a good overall introduction and helpful annotations. But very much is missing, including many *Cahiers* articles that are referred to in the articles included or in Hillier's own notes. Missing, for instance, is the article that many consider the opening shot in the *auteur* barrage, Truffaut's "A Certain Tendency in the French Cinema"; also, Bazin's landmark "The Evolution of Film Language" (developed from a *Cahiers* article); and the very *Cahiers* article by Godard that replies to Bazin, which I quoted above. Hillier says that he wanted the book to "contain largely newly translated material rather than material already available in English." The new translations (by Liz Heron) are good, but the "largely" is an escape hatch because Hillier includes at least nine selections that are available elsewhere and that he felt were essential. His statement seems to rationalize an economic decision, to keep the book's price down. As a result, instead of being a definitive and self-contained anthology of the period's best, this book needs to be supplemented by other books, most of them listed in it. (Imagine publishing an anthology of the best French short stories of the period and omitting Camus's "The Guest" because it's available elsewhere.)

In an appendix Hillier outlines the topics in the three volumes to come, covering the years 1960-68, 1969-72, and the later 1970s. Unsurprisingly, the second of these three crystallizes a radical change that had been growing through the 1960s. Marxism becomes salient—a much-discussed milestone is the 1970 essay on Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*, a collective text signed by the editors—and from then on, with equal non-surprise, the names of Althusser, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault figure as prime influences. It is no attempt to derogate those minds to say that, by this devolution, *Cahiers* lost its uniqueness and joined the mainstream of modern French critical theory in all the arts and some of the sciences.

None of these three future volumes, valuable as they may prove to be, can have what this first volume has, even in its truncated form. It bursts with passion, with discoveries and extensions of freedom, with joyful argument, the forging of a new prospect of art out of the "mistakenly" valued old. It is a memorial to a vital community of spirits, foolish, fervent, and fine. One entry alone symbolizes all this, Godard's brief review of Truffaut's *Les 400 Coups*, a review flecked with ecstasy, exalted with celebration. Midway in the one long paragraph, Godard writes that this "will be the proudest, stubbornest, most obstinate, in other words most free, film in the world." And he concludes:

> *Les 400 Coups* will be a film signed Frankness. Rapidity. Art. Novelty. Cinematograph. Originality. Impertinence. Seriousness. Tragedy. Renovation. Ubu-Roi. Fantasy. Ferocity. Affection. Universality. Tenderness.

The new age was singing the fact that it was a new age. When comes such another?

STANLEY KAUFFMANN

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AMERICAN MOMENTS

Mining Town: The Photographic Record of T.N. Barnard and Nellie Stockbridge from the Coeur d'Alenes by Patricia Hart and Ivar Nelson

(University of Washington Press/Idaho State Historical Society, 179 pp., $24.95)

One morning last summer a companion and I were driving down from Lookout Pass, through the thick pine forests of Northwest Idaho. At the foot of the mountains we came to the small town of Wallace. Its streets were festooned with bunting. Stretched across the main street was the banner: "1884—CENTENNIAL—1984." That was reason enough to stop. But in that very week the Hecla Mining Company, which was founded in 1891, announced that it was removing its headquarters to Coeur d'Alene, an example of today's precipitous decline in mining in the West. A little earlier two other mining

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companies had announced that they were removing their headquarters from the valley. Two years before, the great Star Mine, the deepest silver mine in the United States, had been permanently closed. The year before that, the great Bunker Hill Mine had been closed, when it was still employing 2,100 people. We had arrived by chance in a Western mining town when its history seemed to have come to an end, rounded off with a bitter mockery in exactly a hundred years.

There are many mining towns in the West that have enjoyed much the same life span, some of them now ghost towns, others restored (like Central City in Colorado) as tourist spots or resorts. They are a reminder of something that is too little observed, the compression of American history; of how much (especially in the West) has happened in so short a time. American history is not thin, as too many Europeans (and also Americans) seem to think; American history is dense and matted.

In 1898 a young photographer, Nellie Stockbridge, came to Wallace to work for a commercial photographer, Thomas Nathan Barnard, who had learned photography from Laton Alton Huffman, the most celebrated landscape photographer on the High Plains. There Nellie Stockbridge stayed, and she and Thomas Barnard not only took photographs for local merchants and made portraits for the citizens of Wallace, but recorded the growth of Wallace regularly and in detail.

Stockbridge's heirs donated a magnificent collection of these photographs to the University of Idaho, and Patricia Hart and Ivar Nelson have made a generous selection of them for this book, and contributed a history of Wallace, conscientiously researched, which is a model of what such a text should be like.

Here are the raw, rough beginnings: the gold rush prospectors, followed in a few years by the silver miners (it is "Silver Valley" that stretches from here to Coeur d'Alene), and then the lead miners. Here is the boisterous life of a mining town as it grew—Wallace never gave much heed to prudes or Prohibition. Here are the fierce mining wars, strikers pitted against strikebreakers, including the black troops of the Twenty-Second U.S. Infantry. And here are the fires, the greatest threat to the mining towns and their wooden buildings, which twice razed Wallace altogether. But here above all is not just the great American romance of life on the frontier, but the record of how quickly these canvas-roofed encampments, for at first that was all they were, were transformed into settled and thriving communities: how a civilization, in short, was built in a generation.

There is a remarkable photograph (taken by Barnard) of a group of amateur speculators, in their small rough log cabin, after they had discovered silver ore in what was to become the great Hercules Mine in 1892. How can anyone not linger over it? The four men, but in particular the four women, one of them as pretty as a picture, looking as if she should rather be a teacher back at the Hotchkiss School. The looks of quiet satisfaction on their faces, as they sat round the table with its oilcloth and candles, make it one of the most unusual mining pictures I have seen. Between 1901 and 1924 the Hercules Mine, which was one of the few to remain independent, yielded an income of $43 million, and paid out dividends of $19 million to the few partners.

Equally remarkable are the pictures that show the rapid growth of the settled and civil community: the spring-platform wagon taking children and their teachers on a Sunday school picnic in 1912. There is the early arrival of the new chain stores, which played so large a part in settling the West; the Golden

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Rule Store of J.C. Penney, for example, opened in 1915. The dates are so important. Is it not true?—the history of America is compressed.

When we began to walk about Wallace in 1984, almost the first store we saw was the office of the agent of the Sears Mail Order Catalog—another chain that transformed life in the early West. It is still there. There are early pictures here of Sixth Street, the main business street into which we had driven off the mountains, which were instantly recognizable, including one of the streets hung with flags and bunting for Teddy Roosevelt's visit in 1903—which (apart from some telephone wires) might be a picture of the street we saw celebrating the town's centennial.

As we nosed about the place, oldtimers kept saying: "Of course there was Lana Turner." Julia Jean Mildred Frances Turner was born in Wallace on February 8, 1920, and educated at its public schools. Not only do some of them remember her skipping about the Congregational Church—"that one, right there"—but Vi Tidd, who came to Wallace in 1917, had looked after "Julia Jean," as she still naturally calls her, while her father worked for Tidds at the City Dye Works, and her mother at the Samuel Hotel's Beauty Salon.

Lo and behold, here in this book is a picture of Lana Turner as a very young girl with her mother—just one of thousands of the studio portraits of citizens. It was taken by Nellie Stockbridge, who herself presented it to Lana Turner when she returned to Wallace for the only time, to sell War Bonds in 1942. American history is so very satisfying, not least in this book, for which everyone concerned with it, including the University of Washington Press, deserves the highest praise.

HENRY FAIRLIE

TRAVELS WITH A PHILOSOPHER

The Time of My Life by W. V. Quine

(The MIT Press: A Bradford Book, 499 pp., $19.95)

W. V. Quine is the most important American philosopher at least since C. I. Lewis, whose last major book came out in 1946, and the most important philosopher of the English-speaking world since Wittgenstein, who died in 1951. It is a measure of the inward-turning professionalism of philosophy in recent times that many, perhaps most, educated people in the United States have never heard of him. Unlike A. J. Ayer, his approximate British contemporary, and in broad terms his philosophical ally, Quine has been responsible for no visible iconoclasm of the sort that arouses indignant attention. He records that his religious doubts began at the age of nine and were never afterward stilled. He does not share the utopian political superstitions that now attract much of the enthusiasm once given to supernaturalism. But these disloyalties have been a matter of occasional asides. He has throughout his long and productive career remained an austerely technical philosopher-logician.

There is a chunk of the history of thought that is commonly called the Golden Age of American Philosophy. It began with Peirce, America's first great philosopher—a Harvard graduate and the son of a Harvard professor, but too disorderly to be employed there—and was confined to Harvard through the careers of William James, Josiah Royce, and George Santayana. It came to an end at some point, depending on your taste, in the long later life of John Dewey. Between 1910 and 1916 James and Royce died, and Santayana retired to Europe; from then on American philosophy fell increasingly under the revived domination of the old colonial power.

Between 1945 and 1960 British control was so firm that a distinguished American philosopher could begin a survey of the state of the subject in his own country in the late 1950s with a remark to the effect that Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin were the most influential philosophers. Quine has done more than anyone to change this state of affairs—indeed, to reverse it completely. Wittgenstein and Austin were, in very different ways, both philosophers of ordinary language, believing that philosophical problems were really symptoms of mental confusion, to be dispelled by close attention to the way in which language is ordinarily used. Quine, on the other hand, is in the tradition of Russell, Carnap, and the logical positivists. He thinks that the prime task of philosophy is to understand and clarify the language of science, and that the best way to go about it is logical "regimentation," in which the lucid formal replacements of logical notation are offered for the problem-engendering conceptions of language and thought.

Since his major work, *Word and Object*, appeared in 1960, Quine's preeminence, and the preeminence of the kind of philosophy he practices, have prevailed and intensified. Close allies such as Nelson Goodman and Donald Davidson have attracted comparable attention and respect; even the critics whom he and his associates take most seriously (such as Noam Chomsky and Saul Kripke) are of the same broadly formalist, scientistic persuasion. Quine's philosophy is notably systematic, in contrast to the article-borne bittiness of many of his contemporaries. (It has recently been admirably expounded as a system by Roger F. Gibson Jr. in his *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, a work that Quine congratulates in characteristic terms. "In reading Gibson I gain a welcome perspective on my own work. Fussing with the structure from my cramped position within it, I do not easily gain a proportionate overall view of what I am up to.") As that quotation suggests, Quine is a most elegant, perceptive, and entertaining writer, combining a poetic alertness to remote likenesses with his philosophically professional nose for distinctions. He has inaugurated a new (even if comparatively centripetal) Golden Age of American Philosophy with great style.

"Philosophy of science," he has said, "is philosophy enough." What it amounts to is the attempt to show that the purposes of thought and speech about a host of more or less puzzling and mysterious things—meanings, mo-

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dalities like necessity and possibility, mental states—can be served by forms of discourse that do not imply the existence of anything but physical objects and (an obstacle to his passion for economy) classes or sets. Moreover, as well as minimizing the number of kinds of things that have to be taken on trust (instead of being accounted for in terms of other, simpler things), Quine is an inveterate unifier. Logic, theory of knowledge, and metaphysics, the three great central philosophical disciplines, are all reconnected to science, to empirical natural science, from which they had been separated by a long and seemingly impregnable tradition. The truths of logic for him are just the most general truths of science—neither, as some have thought, descriptions of another world of peculiar abstract entities, nor, as others have believed, the outcome of mere linguistic convention. Theory of knowledge he takes to be, in effect, cognitive psychology, an account of the growth of science that is itself part of science. Ontology, finally, determines what kinds of things are irresistibly implied to exist by the beliefs we take to be true; implied by science as a whole, it is thus part of science.

QUINE has now written a large autobiography; at 499 pages it is half as long again as *Word and Object*. It is a singular work, and might more aptly have been called "The Places of My Life" than *The Time of My Life*. Like most mathematically minded philosophers from Plato onward, he has a rather grudging attitude to time (revealed in his "regimentation" of tense and events), but he is addicted to place. He has loved maps since youth (two early ones of his own making are illustrated) and, in rare excursions from his specialty in later life, has reviewed atlases. When he first began to travel on his own he hungered for new states; he sadly recollects just having missed New Hampshire, because of the itch of some fellow travelers to get on. With maturity, Quine turns into the Don Giovanni of world travel. The number of countries he has visited steadily mounts and is precisely recorded. At the time of writing he reckons to have traveled to 113, five of which have been gobbled up by others since he was there. Of the 81 that are left, he writes, "I have flown through twenty-one without putting down and have looked wistfully across borders into yet another eight."

Quine's principal documentary source is "an archive of letters that I wrote to my parents over forty years," which partly accounts for the intensely geographic emphasis of the book. The sights, foods, and clothes of foreign parts are just the sort of thing one puts in letters to one's parents, not so much to conceal disreputable private conduct, but to stop them from fussing. His decision to rely on it, to the exclusion of more personal recollections, is telling. In a final chapter of character description, reluctantly embarked on, he writes that he is orderly and frugal and, going a bit deeper, "I have little bent for soul-searching." To be sure, the act of publishing an autobiography does not put its author under an obligation to let one into the deepest recesses of his private life. Rousseau is an extreme case, rather than an ideal model, and Quine goes to the opposite extreme.

Not only does he largely confine himself to records of travel, but the places so resolutely visited excite in him little evident rapture. The ancient splendors of Peru and Egypt are simply enumerated with cool detachment. Even Quine's iron reserve, however, is not proof against Venice. First in 1929, its "unearthly charm" made it his favorite city. Four years later he is delightedly back there with his first wife. Back again in 1950, with his second wife, he finds it as "implausible as ever." In 1964 "the

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magic of Venice was undampened even by the flood." For Quine this is strong language.

He has been even more entranced with Mexico, in particular with Taxco, the scene of several protracted visits. Tequila and pulque, with its agreeable variety of names, exercise a particular magnetism. But for the most part what Quine sees on his travels he records neatly, precisely, and without evident emotion, pleased only to have got a bit more of the world's detail properly registered. The only error I detected is the charming ascription of Strawberry Hill to Hugh Walpole, rather than to Horace.

Despite his fastidiousness, Quine seems to have been notably gifted at losing things in the course of his travels, from his earliest hitchhiking and freight-hopping days onward. Suitcases, passports, tents seem to fly from his touch, and his pocket is picked with well above average frequency. He tends to have trouble with bureaucrats and at frontiers, or on the way to them anyway. Thus he lets slip one feature of his otherwise well-guarded personality: a resistance to authority and instruction.

A great number of people are mentioned in these pages, but few emerge very distinctly. For example, his mother, who gave her 21-year-old son both *Principia Mathematica* and Skeat on English etymology, to nourish his enchantment with word origins, must have been a more interesting woman than he lets on. By being in the right place at the right time and in most places at some time or other, Quine has met nearly everyone of note, during his epoch, in the fields of learning that he cultivates. (He never met Wittgenstein, who in 1932 did not bring himself to reply to a note.) But the luminaries remain a curiously undifferentiated lot of pretty good fellows, whose help and other kindnesses are graciously recalled but who leave little individual impression. The exception is Whitehead, *pontifex maximus* of Harvard philosophy when Quine arrived there in 1931, who was strange enough to stand out from the rest, with his episcopal manner and tendency to say things like "That's ripping, old fellow," for all the world, as if he were being played by C. Aubrey Smith.

In this respect Quine as an autobiographer is of the school of C. R. Attlee, British prime minister from 1945 to 1951, whose *As It Happened* is full of such dusky gems as "Met Gandhi after lunch. We had an interesting talk." All sorts of powerful and fascinating people about whom one would wish to learn are simply enumerated rather than described. The logician H. M. Sheffer breaks out of the inventory with some puns, pretty good ones. But a period at the Center for Advanced Studies at Wesleyan, dining once a week with Edmund Wilson and Herbert Read, yields only their names, as does an introduction, in a palace of Talleyrand's, to Althusser and Foucault.

The philosopher R. G. Collingwood, in a short, brilliant, far from ingenuous autobiography, said that "the autobiography of a man whose business is thinking should be the story of his thought." Quine has a bit to say about the toilsomeness of thinking and writing and briefly sketches some of his findings and the way to them. There is not much about influences, apart from an acknowledgment of early captivation by Russell, which fits with Quine's statement "early and late I have worked alone." From the "cramped position" within his system of ideas, he has nothing to say about that system's place in the general history of thought in our age. A product of Frederick Lewis Allen's America, lucidly recalled in the pre-academic, more or less homebound chapters, Quine adopts the stance of an old-fashioned craftsman who knows he makes a good quality article and you can take it or leave it. Threatened by seasickness in a trip from Copenhagen to Lübeck, he saved his wife and himself from the worst by expounding to her Cantor's proof that there are more irrational numbers than ratios.

Quine's devotion to language began with his early excitement about etymology, developed into his career as logician and philosopher of language, and reveals itself irresistibly in his writing, in which the love of order and frugality he ascribes to himself is everywhere present. Naturally he is, although not all that much of a reader, a Wodehouse addict. There is a relaxed playfulness about the way in which he expresses himself, like that of an otter in its comparably comfortable medium of water. The wit and ingenuity of his prose compensate for the resolute limitation to the external that has governed this account of his life.

ANTHONY QUINTON

Anthony Quinton is president of Trinity College, Oxford.

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press by Abe Peck (Pantheon). The facts, and the flavor, of a chapter in a hip movement. (Reviewed 9/16&23/85)

Germany Today by Walter Laqueur (Little, Brown). A calm and close analysis of German anxieties. (9/2/85)

Letters, Summer 1926: Pasternak, Tsvetayeva, Rilke edited by Yevgeny Pasternak, Yelena Pasternak, and Konstantin M. Azadovsky (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). The curious correspondence of three poets. (9/2/85)

Late Settings by James Merrill (Atheneum). A new, elegiac collection of lyrics. (8/5/85)

The Call: An American Missionary in China by John Hersey (Knopf). An unsentimental saga of one Christian's half-century in China. (5/13/85)

Brotherhood of Arms: General Dynamics and the Business of Defending America by Jacob Goodwin (Times Books). The rise and fall of one defense contractor. (Reviewed 8/12&19/85)

Her First American by Lore Segal (Knopf). A love story, melting-pot style. (8/5/85)

In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity by Daniel J. Kevles (Knopf). A history of excesses and a gallery of eccentrics. (8/5/85)

Reflections on Gender and Science by Evelyn Fox Keller (Yale University Press). How men have shaped the scientific method, and women might help reshape it. (7/15&22/85)

Lives of the Saints by Nancy Lemann (Knopf). Coming of age in a daze in New Orleans. (6/24/85)

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Pretorian Guards

THE CONFUSION in South Africa has made a gift of clarity to the United States. A day does not pass without the moral identity of some politician or pundit smoked out. By their attitude toward apartheid they will be known. Among neo- and paleo-conservatives there have been some splendid instances of impatience with the extenuations of the South African evil: for example, Mayor Koch (neo) and the Weber-Gingrich gang (paleo). South Africa, after all, puts anticommunism to the test. It reveals whether your opposition to totalitarianism is based on a lively horror of physical and political suffering or on a remorseless fidelity to received dogma. Anybody who cannot bear Sakharov's internment in Gorky should not bear easily Mandela's internment in Pollsmoor. Moral equivalence; I hear somebody mutter. Damn close, I say. Students of the taxonomy of modern tyranny will recognize in the South African case an interesting combination of fascist and communist features: a systematic use of terror by means of a politically established security apparatus; the control of opinion in the name of ideology; a supreme doctrine of racial superiority; a constant expansion of power in the name of a myth of encirclement; a faith in force, and a militarism designed to foment internal as much as external fear. Only a totalitarian state could command a society to pretend that certain living, breathing, thinking, writing, acting individuals in its midst are not there. Only a totalitarian state could herd hundreds of schoolchildren into armored patrol cars and carry them off. No, the reason for cursing and containing the Soviet Union is not because there is no state in the world whose inhabitants are more miserable; I doubt that there are 22 million Russians in the Soviet Union whose lives are daily as debased and disfigured as the 22 million blacks in South Africa. The Soviet difference, rather, is Soviet power, and that its evil is for export. The Russians have designs upon the freedom of others; the South Africans, only upon the freedom of their own. A difference of consequence, particularly for American foreign policy. But nobody is proposing that America ignore Gorbachev for Botha. The greater threat is clear. It is a threat, however, not an alibi.

THE ANTICOMMUNISM of other conservatives is flunking the South African test. About the Rev. Jerry Falwell, the less said the better; one day he will find himself at the gates of heaven pleading that when he spoke of South Africa he was a phony. But the most detailed and disgraceful evidence of the conservative tolerance for Afrikaaner tyranny came in *Commentary*. Paul Johnson (still "formerly editor of the *New Statesman*"; apostasy is quite a career move) makes the argument against disinvestment. Fair enough; Alan Paton and Helen Suzman argue against it, too. But what an argument this is! We learn that the problem is not South Africa, but Africa—more specifically, "the curse of Africa—social engineering." Thus the South African policy of "movement control" is only a technique of fighting crime, a response to increasing rates of murder and robbery in congested urban centers. (Let us have a little "movement control," then, at the 96th Street station of the Seventh Avenue IRT.) Not a thought is given to the origins of black crime in the shantytowns (that would be liberal racism), nor to the truth that "movement control," like other ingenuities of apartheid, like social engineering itself, was invented not by blacks but by whites, not by Africans but by Britons (that would be self-flagellation). Still, there are ways in which South Africa "differs from the rest of the continent"—for example, "it is in many ways a free country." There is an independent judiciary where "even non-whites" (imagine!) "can get justice." And there is "a parliamentary constitution," albeit with "a limited franchise." Why, then, all the commotion? Johnson in London has grasped what Tutu in Johannesburg has not, that "at the rate things are moving, apartheid could be dead and officially buried in five years." (See Diarist, TNR, September 30, 1990.) Capitalism, you see, will do the work. For the real iniquity is "ethnic socialism," which is a form of "state interference in every aspect of economic activity." Has any more extraordinary definition of the South African system ever been devised? But at least it brings it all back home. The right wing in Pretoria is guilty of a left-wing sin. Phew!

I DO NOT mean to suggest that Johnson supports apartheid. I know that he does not. But he may as well support it. For what is the difference between supporting apartheid, if you are against sanctions, against disinvestment, against public diplomacy, against public protest, and not supporting apartheid? Already I hear the objections. Sanctions and the lot are mere nostrums. Maybe; but no less a nostrum is "constructive engagement," or the economic reductionism of the free marketeers. Liberal posturing is offensive. Occasionally; but not every moral position is a posture. There is very little that the United States can do. Probably; but then at least let the American conscience be clear. It is in the American interest to have a friendly government there. Absolutely; but a friendly government, not a white government. A friend recently observed that in the strategic discussion about South Africa the assumption is almost always made that a black government will be an enemy of the United States. If ever there was a self-fulfilling proposition, that is it.

PERHAPS THE MOST AMUSING of the exonerations of South Africa is the analogy with the United States. Our racial problem took time, you hear it said, and so will theirs; even President Reagan says so. But the analogy between the United States and South Africa is nothing but reverse moral equivalence. South Africa does not have a racial problem. It is a racial problem. American slavery, on the other hand, was an American anomaly, and it finally crumbled before the true character of the American state. And I fail to see how the patriots on this side of the Potomac can smugly condemn South African violence in full view of the other side of the Potomac. Have they forgotten that a war was fought between the freedom and the unfreedom on the opposite banks of this river? The slaves were not emancipated nor the union preserved by "negotiation" with a carefully screened Confederate "leadership" that "renounced" the use of violence and the support of foreign powers. There came a time when the only way to better this country was to bloody this country.

L.W.

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